Knowledge in Later Islamic Philosophy

Mulla Ṣādrā on Existence, Intellect, and Intuition

Ibrahim Kalin



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IBRAHIM KALIN

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Uṣūl	*Sharḥ uṣūl al-kāfī (Kitāb al-'aql wa'l-jahl)*, ed. M. Khwājawī (Tehran: AH 1366) 5 Vols.

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INTRODUCTION

Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhim ibn Yaḥyā al-Qawāmī al-Shīrāzī (1571–1640),[1] known as Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī and more popularly as Mullā Ṣadrā, is one of the most prominent figures of post-Avicennan Islamic philosophy. His school of thought called 'transcendent wisdom' (*al-ḥikmat al-muta'āliyah*) has made a deep impact on Islamic philosophy in Persia, Ṣadrā's homeland, and the subcontinent of India. Like his predecessors, Ṣadrā worked and composed his works from within the Islamic intellectual tradition and sought to combine the major strands of that tradition. As a diligent student, he dealt with all of the central problems of Islamic philosophy handed down from the Greeks to his own time. As a master, he made a number of important contributions to the form and content of those problems and introduced several new concepts. His relentless effort to dovetail revealed knowledge, (i.e., the Qur'ān), philosophical demonstration (*burhān*) and realized or mystical knowledge (*'irfān*) has led him to span through the entire spectrum of classical and medieval philosophy from the question of existence and causality and to self-knowledge and knowledge of God.

This makes Ṣadrā an invaluable resource for the later history of Islamic philosophy. Tracing the sources of Ṣadrā's thought is also a search for the soul of Islamic philosophy. The rich tapestry of ideas we find in this history bespeaks the resilience of the Islamic intellectual tradition after the influence of Hellenistic lore had considerably dwindled and many homegrown problems of Islamic philosophy had taken the center stage. To read Ṣadrā is to read the history of how persisting philosophical problems can be re-discussed, restated, and reformulated in new contexts. The fact that Ṣadrā was born into a world imbued with what we

might call ‘Shiite spirituality’ and became the student of Ibn Ṣīnā, Suhrawardī, and Ibn al-‘Arabī all at once is indicative of the general tendency of post-Avicennan Islamic philosophy to move ever closer to a grand synthesis. The synthesis in question is one that aims at securing a harmonious relationship between the mind and the heart while taking both concepts to their logical ends to avoid a soulless philosophy on the one hand, and a groundless spirituality, on the other. Ṣadrā’s intellectual journey is in many ways parallel to the intellectual journey of the Islamic world after the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

No grand synthesis is possible without choosing an anchor point. Ṣadrā takes existence (*wujūd*) as his anchor point and revises the entire history of Islamic philosophy in light of what he calls the primacy of existence (*aṣālat al-wujūd*). As I discuss in Chapter II, Ṣadrā was extremely critical of Suhrawardī’s defense of the primacy of essence (*aṣālat al-māhiyyah*) and had considered it a philosophical error leading to an essentialist metaphysics. He was also critical of Ibn Ṣīnā for failing to fully grasp the centrality of the problem of existence and for producing an incomplete metaphysics. Even though Ṣadrā incorporated many elements from both the Peripatetic and Illuminationist traditions, he eventually seems to have found himself at home in Ibn al-‘Arabi’s thought and the elaborate vocabulary of existence developed by his students Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī and Dāwūd al-Qayṣarī.

With this tradition in mind, Ṣadrā developed his basic claim that no problem of philosophy can be addressed accurately in the absence of a proper ontology. If existence, as Ṣadrā understands it, is the most comprehensive of all concepts and the most real of all realities, then all philosophical problems will have to be revised after formulating a thorough ontology. For Ṣadrā, defining existence as a secondary intelligible or as a property of things is to make a category mistake and place the cart before the horse. Ṣadrā’s overall concern is to avoid the trap of taking existence to be a sum of *existents* (*mawjūdāt*) and make it *one* of the constituents of what we call reality. Instead, Ṣadrā seeks

to place existence at the center of everything from the corporeal to the intellectual, from the mundane to the divine. 'Transcendent wisdom' is an ambitious attempt to formulate such a being-centered metaphysics where all philosophical analysis begins with existence and eventually ends with it.

One area in which Ṣadrā has applied this view of existence to the fullest extent is his theory of knowledge. As I discuss in greater detail in the following pages of this book, Ṣadrā rejects all of the major theories of knowledge before him for having subjectivist tendencies. For him, the Peripatetic definition of knowledge as 'abstraction' (*tajarrud*) and 'impression' or representation (*irtisām*) gives us only the contents of the mind, not the true knowledge of what we know. Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's formulation of knowledge as a 'relation' (*iḍāfah*) makes all cognitive acts dependent on relationality and thus jeopardizes the intrinsic intelligibility of the objects of knowledge. Furthermore, it runs the risk of making knowledge a property of the knower. Even Suhrawardī's concept of knowledge as presence (*ḥuḍūr*) and illumination (*ishrāq*), since it was based on an essentialist metaphysics, falls short of drawing out the existential dimension of cognitive acts.

Against these well-established notions of knowledge, Ṣadrā launches numerous attacks and attempts to shift the focus from knowledge as a mental act of representation to knowledge as unveiling existence. Once we establish existence as the ground of all meaning and reality, then we realize, according to Ṣadrā, that knowing is nothing but a cognitive interaction with existence that reveals itself in countless modalities, forms, shapes and colors. In knowing things, we unveil and decipher an aspect of existence. By defining knowledge as a 'mode of existence' (*naḥw al-wujūd*), Ṣadrā subsumes all cognition under the rubric of existence and makes epistemology an exercise in ontology. He mobilizes a number of arguments to substantiate this point. Understanding these arguments and the way Ṣadrā develops them will be the main task of this book.

Among these arguments, the unification of the intellector and the intellected (*ittiḥād al-ʿāqil wa'l-maʿqūl*) stands out as a central theme in Ṣadrā's works. In a rather untypical way, Ṣadrā has resuscitated an old problem in Greek and Islamic philosophy while formulating an epistemology of what we might call intellectual mysticism. His robust defense of the unification argument is unique in the history of philosophy with almost no equal approaching his care and passion for it. As I discuss in Chapter I, the long history of the unification debate, which goes back to the Greeks, is also a history of competing metaphysical and epistemological systems. Those who rejected the unification argument were aware of its far-reaching implications and rejected it as mere poetry, mystical utterance, and even sophistry. Those who defended it with a passion seem to have had a philosophical mission to overcome the limits of Peripatetic rationalism.

Ṣadrā, too, was aware of the consequences of the unification argument. He held that for knowledge to be a means of disclosing the 'gradational' (*tashkīk*) and ever-dynamic reality of existence, it must be more than some cognitive constructions of my mind and a mental picture of the world outside me. It must be related to the essential reality of what I know, i.e., existence manifested in a particular form. Furthermore, it must be related to some essential features of existence, i.e., presence, light, clarity, witnessing. To say that true knowledge comes about when the knower unites with the intellective form of what is known is to deny any central role to the knowing subject, and place all meaning and cognition within a larger context of intelligibility. For Ṣadrā, this context is provided by the all-inclusive reality of existence, which not only makes things real but also saturates them with meaning.

These and a host of other premises lead our philosopher to develop an epistemology comprehensive enough to do justice to representational-discursive knowledge on the one hand, and intuitive and mystical knowledge on the other. Ṣadrā takes these two forms of knowledge not as alternate explanations of the

same reality but as belonging to different orders of intelligibility. While knowledge as correspondence can explain how I know with a certain degree of certainty that the tree in front of me has x number of branches, it cannot account for the fact that I *know* I *am* in pain. For Ṣadrā, the mistake of the previous philosophers was to take the former as a substitute for the latter and think that one general theory of knowledge can explain all phenomena. Ṣadrā's main goal is to show why different orders of being call for different orders of intelligibility. The onus of Ṣadrā's 'transcendent wisdom' is to work out the implications of the multiple states of existence and what sorts of knowledge claims they give rise to.

These claims have far reaching consequences even within the parameters of traditional Islamic philosophy. Once existence is defined as the sole reality upon which all philosophical analyses must be based, we no longer operate in a world in which meaning moves from a knowing subject to the world outside it. Instead, both terms, i.e., the self and the world derive meaning from the fact of having some share of existence. That is why the 'self,' as the term is understood today, does not even emerge as a major concept except within the context of what I call a 'metaphysics of relations'. The self in Ṣadrā is a thoroughly non-subjectivist term in that it does not stand over against a world which is devoid of meaning, intelligibility and intrinsic relations, and with which it comes *a posteriori* to have a cognitive relationship. Placing the self outside the all-inclusive reality of existence, which is a logical absurdity anyway, and construing it to be a 'disengaged agent,' to use Charles Taylor's suggestive expression, is to set a world-less subject over against a subject-less world.

There is no question that something like the Cartesian self could not have emerged from Ṣadrā's elaborate discussions of self, soul or spirit for the simple fact that none of these terms could have a claim of independence outside the various contexts of relations and intelligibility provided by existence. Ṣadrā could not have imagined a self that could step outside existence and

look over the world from a position of what Thomas Nagel has called the 'view from nowhere.' Nor could he envision a self that would make a display of absolute hubris by calling itself the sole ground of intelligibility and claiming to impart meaning to all things. In its modern context, such a notion of the self conjures up images of mastery and domination over the non-self. Ṣadrā's gradational ontology preempts such a possibility and presents instead a view of the self that remains anchored in existence as all other things are.

The present book is comprised of three chapters and an appendix. The first chapter traces the history of the unification argument from the Greeks to Mullā Ṣadrā. I begin with the earliest statements of the problem in Plato and Aristotle. Even though Plato's works do not contain any clear formulation of the unification argument, his attempt to posit existence and knowledge as a single experience of participation makes him a part of the history of the debate. Aristotle, whom the Muslims knew through the eyes of the *Theology of Aristotle*, provides the first clear statement of the problem. Like in many other key issues, however, Aristotle lends himself to multiple readings, and Ṣadrā does not miss the opportunity to read him as supporting the unification argument. Ṣadrā takes a similar approach in reading Alexander of Aphrodisias and Plotinus.

The Muslim Peripatetics and Ibn Ṣīnā chiefly among them rejected the unification argument as a remnant of Plotinian mysticism for a number of ontological and epistemological reasons. They, however, accepted the idea when it applied to God only. Suhrawardī, who is the last figure taken up in Chapter I, follows suit and denies the unification argument any epistemic legitimacy. It is against this long and complicated tradition that Ṣadrā tries to make his case for unification. While the debate over unification has many defenders and detractors in Islamic philosophy, in tracing its history, I have confined myself to those whom Ṣadrā mentions explicitly in the *Asfār* and his other writings.

Chapter II is devoted to a detailed analysis of Ṣadrā's theory of knowledge. As Ṣadrā insists on the principiality of existence in all philosophical problems, I begin with a survey of his elaborate vocabulary of existence. Ṣadrā revises many of the erstwhile discussions of existence and rejects essence or quiddity (*māhiyyah*) as having no reality of its own. Instead, he proposes the 'gradation' (*tashkīk*), 'primacy' (*aṣālah*) and unity (*waḥdah*) of existence as the main terms of his analysis. I then turn to the relationship between existence and intelligibility—a relationship which Ṣadrā masterfully examines. Ṣadrā holds that existence is intrinsically intelligible and does not need an outside agent such as a knower to be predicated of meaning-properties. Furthermore, existence is value-laden in that it is the source of such axiological qualities as goodness, perfection, and plenitude. His analysis thus ties together the three aspects of classical philosophy: ontology, epistemology and axiology.

After discussing Ṣadrā's critique of the four theories of knowledge developed by Peripatetics and Kalam thinkers, I turn to the concept of the intellect (*'aql*) in general and the simple and active intellects in particular. While Ṣadrā focuses on knowledge as a mode of existence, he also admits active intellect as an agent of knowledge. He even goes so far as to define it as the *content* of knowledge, i.e., universal knowledge. With this, he appears to agree with the Peripatetic notion of the active intellect as providing the principle(s) of universal knowledge. There is, however, a discrepancy between the unification argument and the active intellect as the storehouse of intelligible forms, and I argue that Mullā Ṣadrā could have developed a fairly complete theory of knowledge without requiring or endorsing the active intellect of the Peripatetics. Having discussed this tension in Ṣadrā, I analyze self-knowledge and God's knowledge of things as two paramount cases of the unification argument.

Chapter III draws out the implications of Chapter II and seeks to bring out the ontological and mystical element in Ṣadrā's thought. Here I focus on two issues. The first is the question of mystical knowledge and the extent to which such a term applies

to Ṣadrā's epistemology. While Ṣadrā accepts the analytical aspects of representational knowledge for certain types of phenomena, he rejects it as inadequate for higher orders of being. Instead, he argues that existence can be known only intuitively and that intuition is not only an epistemic but also a spiritual act of encounter and witnessing. In exploring the question of mysticism, I also discuss Ṣadrā's relation to traditional Sufism within the context of Safavid Shiism and the Akhbāri opposition to Sufism and philosophy.

The second issue is the definition of knowledge as finding existence. Ṣadrā establishes a close link between degrees of existence and levels of consciousness. A logical result of this is a doctrine of 'ontological vitalism' according to which all things, animate and inanimate, have some degree of consciousness by virtue of the fact they exist. It is within this context that Ṣadrā develops his central thesis that when we interact with the world around us, we interact with the various modalities and degrees of existence. What we know or claim to know is always an aspect of existence.

The appendix is a translation of Ṣadrā's treatise devoted to an analytical treatment and defense of the unification argument. The treatise is titled *Risālah fī ittiḥād al-'āqil wa'l-ma'qūl* and has been written after the *Asfār*. While the *Risālah* reiterates many of the points made in the *Asfār*, it is a more elaborate and sophisticated discussion and defense of the unification argument. Ṣadrā begins with a general statement of the problem and then moves to a point-by-point response to Ibn Ṣīnā, his arch rival in the debate. The *Risālah* ends with several important quotations from the *Theology of Aristotle*.

There is no translation without distortion. In translating the *Risālah* as well as the other passages throughout the book, I have tried to use a generally accessible language. I avoided verbosities and tried to remain loyal to the original text. Neologisms, however, are inevitable when translating someone like Mullā Ṣadrā into English. This is due not only to the differences between the Arabic and English philosophical vocabularies but

also to Ṣadrā's highly sophisticated and nuanced language. Anyone translating classical Arabic philosophical texts is also faced with the problem of the absence of a well-established and widely accepted vocabulary of terms in the English language. I cannot claim to have overcome this problem in my translations. But I have tried my best to produce a consistent and lucid translation.

A few examples will clarify my point. Ṣadrā uses the word *'aql* and its derivatives extensively and with commendable cogency. Most of the times, I used 'intellect' rather than 'reason' to render it. The word 'reason' (*ratio*) and its derivatives including reasonable, rational, rationalization, etc., are heavily loaded with the modern usage of the term. The word *ma'qūl*, for instance, hardly makes any sense when translated as 'rational' or 'reasonable.' The word intellect, I admit, is not perfect either for it conveys a more mystical and non-discursive meaning than the Arabic *'aql*. The Arabic language does not have the reason-intellect bifurcation even though it has an array of words to express the various modes of rational and mystical knowledge. Such words as 'intellective' (for *'aqlī*), 'intellective-ness' (for *'aqliyyah*) and 'intelligible-ness' (for *ma'qūliyyah*) sound rather quaint in modern English. But there is no way of getting around such neologisms if we are to bring out the nuances in Ṣadrā's philosophical vocabulary.

Writing a doctoral dissertation on Mullā Ṣadrā and turning it into a book in the present form was an intellectual journey filled with agonizing frustrations and humbling rewards. To fully understand Ṣadrā, I had to switch between his world and ours and live most of the time somewhere between the two. My journey was one by which I tried to understand that of Ṣadrā. Its happiest moments were when the two journeys crisscrossed and led to wonderful moments of unification.

NOTE

1. For Ṣadrā's life and works, see my 'An Annotated Bibliography of the Works of Mullā Ṣadrā with a Brief Account of His Life,' *Islamic Studies* Vol. 42, No. 1 (Spring 2003), pp. 21–62. For an extensive survey, see Sajjad H. Rizvi, *Mullā Ṣadrā Shīrāzī: His Life and Works and the Sources for Safavid Philosophy* (Journal of Semitic Studies, Supplement 18 published by Oxford University Press, 2007).

I

THE PROBLEM OF KNOWLEDGE AND THE GRECO-ISLAMIC CONTEXT OF THE UNIFICATION ARGUMENT

Mullā Ṣadrā's claim that knowledge comes about as a result of the unification of the intellect with its object of intellection has a surprisingly long history in both Greek and Islamic philosophy. The earliest phase of the debate can be traced back to the Greeks, namely to Aristotle and his chief commentators Alexander of Aphrodisias and Themistius on the one hand, and Plotinus, on the other. For Muslim philosophers, Aristotle's short and rather cryptic remark in the *De Anima* 429b–430a[1] that immaterial substances are both intellecting and intelligible in themselves represents the first clear statement of the problem. Plotinus' *Enneads*, which was translated into Arabic as the *Uthūlūjyā arisṭūṭālis* and attributed falsely to Aristotle, appears to have played even a larger role in carrying the unification argument to the centre stage. As I shall discuss below, this 'historical mistake' had a lasting impact on the way in which Aristotle was read in the Islamic world and brought in conformity with the broad outlines of the Neoplatonic tradition.

Lest we think that the contested history of the unification argument was confined to a handful of Peripatetic and Neoplatonic philosophers as a minor issue of medieval noetics, it should be pointed out that the Mutakallimūn and the Sufis have not shied away from getting their feet wet in the debate. Just like the philosophers, they have taken positions depending on their

epistemic postulates and philosophical taste. This is by no means surprising because if Ṣadrā is right in claiming that knowledge as unification is the best way to describe what 'realized knowledge' should *eventually* be like, then our countenance or denial of it should say something about our overall philosophical outlook. If we are mystically inclined in our considerations of knowledge, as Ṣadrā is, then we would have little or no qualms about embracing the idea of unification. This is presumably what prompted Shahrazūrī, Suhrawardī's biographer and loyal disciple, to give a mystical exposition of what he called the 'school of unification' (*madhhab al-ittiḥād*) in his *al-Shajarat al-ilāhiyyah*. While calling 'unification' only a metaphor (*majāz*) and eventually rejecting it, Shahrazūrī explains rather lucidly how the idea of unification is linked up with the Sufi tradition:

> What they mean by the unification of the souls with the intelligible forms or with the active intellect is the kind of unification to which the people of spiritual detachment (*arbāb al-tajrīd*) and Sufi masters (*mashāyikh al-ṣūfiyyah*) refer when the soul reaches conjunction (*ittiṣāl*) with some detached lights (*al-anwār al-mujarradah*) in some moments of discharge and dispossession from the body. The soul vanishes from itself as well as from the consciousness of itself because of the power of what reaches it from intellective joys and spiritual pleasures and because of the intensity of radiant illuminations. It is overcome by the dominion of detached intellective lights, which leads it to be extinguished from itself. They call this state unification.[2]

Shahrazūrī adds that the souls that have reached this stage become so drunk in their contemplation of the 'overpowering lights' (*al-anwār al-qāhirah*) that they begin to utter such words of ecstasy as 'I am the Truth!', 'Praise be to me!', 'How great is my affairs!' and 'There is nothing under my robe except God and me!'. He also quotes the famous *ḥadīth* that a believing 'servant does not cease to get closer to God through supererogatory prayers (*al-nawāfil*) and rituals until God becomes the ear through which he hears, the eye with which he sees, the hand

with which he strikes, and the feet with which he walks.' In short, Suhrawardī's great biographer and commentator considers unification a rightly claimed property of the Sufis. The issue at hand, however, is never so simple because if unification is a ground for mystical union in terms of a spiritual epistemology, then we cannot explain why Suhrawardī of all people should reject it as vehemently as Ibn Sīnā and Ibn Rushd. As we shall see later, Ṣadrā appears to be extremely frustrated with this situation, and tries his best to read his predecessors in a favorable light.

Ṣadrā mentions his sources for the unification argument in several places, sometimes agreeing and sometimes disagreeing with them. This chapter will focus on those sources which Ṣadrā mentions explicitly. No attempt will be made to cover the entire history of the unification argument, its diverse interpretations and applications vis-à-vis the active intellect, and its meaning for the immortality of the soul in the various philosophical, theological and mystical schools. As a result, I shall not discuss Ibn Bājjah, Ikhwān al-Ṣafā', Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, Abū'l-Ḥasan al-Āmirī and few other philosophers who could have been included in such a history. Our main task is to follow the history of the argument as Ṣadrā saw it.[3]

The unification argument has been discussed by various thinkers with diverse points of view. Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī (d.1274), the first prominent expositor of the school of Ibn al-'Arabī, for instance, defines 'true knowledge' as a complete unity between the subject and object of knowledge—a definition that comes very close to Ṣadrā's defense of knowledge as presence and unification.

> Know that obtaining the knowledge of something as it is and through the perfection of its knowledge hinges upon unification with what is known. And unification with something is based on the disappearance of all [those qualities] that distinguish the knower from the known. In [the world of] existence, there is a Real Divine element (*amr*) between a thing and others, which necessitates participation (*al-ishtirāk*) without differentiation. And there are

> other things that distinguish this particular thing from what is other than itself. This is one [of the doctrines] in which there is no doubt according to the school of those who affirm the truth (*mashrab al-taḥqīq*). Qūnawī, *al-Nafakhāt al-ilāhiyyah*, p. 32

Qūnawī's significance for Ṣadrā is clear enough: he is one of Ṣadrā's major sources for his intellectual affiliation with the school of Ibn al-'Arabī.[4] Even though Ṣadrā does not quote from him directly on the unification of the knower and the known, Ibn al-'Arabī himself has a lot to say on the subject throughout his magnum opus *al-Futūḥāt al-makkiyyah*.[5] Ibn al-'Arabī notes that we cannot know God in the same way we know things. Our knowledge of sensate and mental objects is based on sensation, logical necessity, or simple experience. None of these, however, applies to God because God is neither a thing nor a concept. The only way there is to know God is through what he calls the 'proof of existence' (*al-burhān al-wujūdī*), which is a direct act of intuition and which does not admit any separation between the knower and the known.[6]

Another important figure among Ṣadrā's indirect sources is Afḍal al-Dīn Kāshānī (d.1213–14), also known as Bābā Afḍal Kāshānī. His importance for the development of Ṣadrā's thought is evident from the fact that one of Ṣadrā's major works on self-knowledge called *Iksīr al-'ārifīn* is based in large part on Kāshānī's *Jāwidān-nāma* written in Persian.[7] In his major philosophical works, most of which deal with the question of self-knowledge as a key to spiritual awareness and salvation, Kāshānī explicitly defends the unification of the knower and the known. For him, the perfect state of perception (*idrāk*) takes place when the intellector, the intellect, and the intelligible are united in a single state of consciousness. Kāshānī says that '… there can be no tool and intermediary between the intellecter, the intellect, and the intelligible, such that an intellecter through intellect would grasp his own intelligible with the tool.'[8] To prove the unity of the intellect and the intelligible, Kāshānī uses the argument of the actuality of intellectual substances—an argument of which Ṣadrā makes profuse use. Since the intellect

is by definition actual when it perceives something and it can never be bereft of such perception in view of its self-knowledge, it is always united with the intelligible. Furthermore, Kāshānī (and later Ṣadrā) considers the unity of existence and knowledge as an existential state whereby one reaches 'complete existence' through consciousness and self-realization. Not surprisingly, Kāshānī turns to a decidedly mystical language when he describes this state by saying that '…the perfection of the act of perception and intellection is in the unification of the intellector, the intellect, and the intellected. It is this that is complete being, perpetual joy, and subsistent enjoyment…'[9]

Arguments for and against unification have not been confined to Muslim thinkers alone. Some Jewish and Christian philosophers writing in Arabic have also been part of the debate, using the unification argument as a support for their particular philosophical assertions. Moses Maimonides, known in Arabic as Ibn Maymūn, for instance, devotes several pages to the problem in his *Dalālat al-ḥā'irīn*. In a language as clear as that of Ṣadrā, he states that the *al-'aql, al-'āqil* and *al-ma'qūl* are one and the same in God 'for ever' (*abadan*) and in fact in every intellect *in actus*.[10] Maimonides asserts that the 'intellect in actuality is nothing but what it intellects' because the 'reality and essence of the intellect is perception.' It is not the case that the intellect is one thing standing on its own and perception is another thing standing as separate from the intellect. When the intellect perceives the *form* of a piece of wood, to use Maimonides' example, it becomes *that form*. Thus the intellect and the intelligible are the same thing. The same rule applies to the process of intellection or perception because 'the act of the intellect, which is its perception, is its very reality and essence.' If the conceptual identification of the intellect and the intelligible is true for all intellects in actuality, it must be so for God as well because God or the Divine intellect contains no potentiality.[11]

The unification argument is also taken up by a certain Christian theologian with the name of Muḥy al-Dīn al-Iṣfahānī (11th or 12th century). In his short treatise on unity and trinity,

Iṣfahānī uses the unification argument as one of the philosophical proofs of the Christian trinity, and tries to give a unitarian interpretation of the trinity presumably in view of his predominantly Islamic environment.[12] Even this ostentatiously apologetic thesis betrays something of the pertinence of the unification debate among medieval intellectuals.

In the *Asfār*, Mullā Ṣadrā gives his own history of the idea tracing it primarily from al-Fārābī's *Risālah fī'l-'aql* back to the *Uthūlūjyā*:

> In this treatise [i.e., al-Fārābī's *Risālah fī'l-'aql*], there are parts that clearly point to the unity of the intellect with the intelligibles and to the possibility of man's becoming a simple active intellect in whom all intelligibles are united. In addition to the clear writings of this teacher [al-Fārābī], there is also the book *Uthūlūjyā* attributed to the first teacher Aristotle and what the Chief Master [Ibn Sīnā] narrates from some of the students of this great philosopher. [By this], I mean Porphyry who wrote a book on the intellect and the intelligibles, which has a section on the unity of the intellect with the intelligibles and its union with the active intellect. There is also a book on this very subject by Alexander of Aphrodisias whom the Chief Master describes as a virtuous and knowledgeable philosopher among the ancients.[13] In spite of all these, they permitted, in a surprising way, the denial of this sublime matter and allowed the [level of] exaggeration with which those who did not examine the matter carefully rejected it just as some later philosophers and Ibn Sīnā and those who came after him did until our own day. Anyone who has not reached this state [of knowledge] should follow Ibn Sīnā's will which he states at the end of the *Ishārāt*. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 427[14]

Although this short historical genealogy does not mention Plato by name and traces the idea as far back as Aristotle only, Plato's ideas loom large in Ṣadrā's defense of the unification argument. For Ṣadrā, the Platonic Forms (*al-muthul al-aflāṭūniyyah*) provide a rigorous ontological basis for the independence of the intelligible world and turn knowledge into a mode of participation and appropriation.[15] Shrugging off the critiques of Plato and his

explanation of the intelligibles, Ṣadrā says that 'the view of Plato and those who came before him among the pillars of wisdom concerning the existence of 'intellective similes' (*al-muthul al-'aqliyyah*), which the natures of corporeal species have, is the most firmly established and sound argument, to which none of the critiques of later philosophers apply.'[16] To see the relevance of this aphorism, we need to look briefly at Plato's attempt to ground knowledge in the Forms (*eidos*), and how it may or may not give credence to Ṣadrā's reconstruction of it as a basis for the unification argument. This will be followed by a discussion of Aristotle, his Alexandrian commentators, and Plotinus, all of whom played a crucial role in the creation of *Aristoteles Arabus*. Then I shall turn to Muslim philosophers and their uneasy relationship with the idea of unification.

1.1. THE GRECO-ALEXANDRIAN BACKGROUND

a. Plato's *bios theoretikos*

The fact that in the historical accounts of the unification debate Plato has been either totally absent or scantily mentioned is somewhat surprising because the later Peripatetics have denied the unification argument on strictly Aristotelian grounds, and attributed it to a rather Platonic way of thinking, implying that unification as defended by the Platonists lends itself to a more or less mystical concept of knowledge. Furthermore, the Platonic theory of knowledge as the noetic appropriation of the Forms appears to be in perfect agreement with the intentions of the defenders of the unification argument. At least, this is how Ṣadrā incorporates Platonic Forms into his theory of knowledge.[17] In a seminal essay, Jean Pépin has addressed this very issue and attempted to show the roots of the doctrine in the Platonic *Dialogues*. Pépin argues that although the *Dialogues* do not present a full-fledged statement of the problem, they contain

important indications for its later development by Plotinus and Proclus.[18]

It will serve us well to remember that one of Plato's perennial concerns was to explain the relation between Forms (*eidos*) and *nous* (mind/intellect) as primary agent of intellection. If knowledge is the perception of Forms and can be achieved only when the soul comes to recognize and 'appropriate' them, then there must be a relation of sorts between the two. For Plato, it is the intellective nature of the *nous* that enables it to 'draw near (*pleesiasas*) [to] and mingle' with the world of the Forms.

> …the true lover of knowledge is always striving after being—that is his true nature; he will not rest in the multiplicity of individuals… until he have [sic] attained the knowledge of the true nature of every essence by a sympathetic and kindred power in the soul, and by that power drawing near (*pleesiasas*) and mingling (*migeis*) and becoming incorporate with very being (*too onti ontos*), having begotten mind and truth, he will have knowledge. *The Republic*, VI, 490 b–c.[19]

This typical description of the Platonic philosopher is based on the *psukhē*'s innate ability to align itself with the intelligible world, which, in turn, creates a 'solidarité d'existence' between *nous* and *eidos*. The isomorphic unity between *nous* and intelligible forms renders the soul an intelligible reality in and of itself. In the *Phaedo* 76–77, Plato gives a vivid description of this unity and refers to a relationship of *homoios* between the essence (*ousia*) of things and the *nous*. At this point, the homogeneity of *nous* and *eidos* becomes one of Plato's forceful arguments for the prenatal existence of *eidos* in us, and provides an anchor point for the theory of knowledge as recollection.[20] The *psukhē* or, depending on the context, *nous*, as the principal agent of intellection in humans, shares an essential unity with the *ousia* of things. It is this unity to which Plato refers when he says that '…the existence of the soul before birth cannot be separated from the existence of the essence.' Since '…beauty, goodness, and the other notions…have a most real and absolute

existence' (*Phaedo*, 76 d–77 a), the soul is able to unite with them not as mental states but as actual experiences.[21]

The essential unity of which Plato speaks makes the soul superior to the body on the one hand, and ontologically akin to the intelligible world, on the other. The soul 'resembles' the Forms for it is simple, indivisible, immortal, and permanent and, given proper conditions, finds no difficulty in participating in the *ousia* of things—an assertion to which we shall return when we look at Ṣadrā's theory of knowledge. This view of the soul, which has left an indelible mark on all medieval philosophers, is predicated upon the idea that the *nous* knows the *intellibilia* by virtue of its belonging to the Divine order:

> Then reflect, Cebes: of all which has been said is not this the conclusion?—that the soul is in the very likeness of the divine, and immortal, and intellectual, and uniform, and indissoluble, and unchangeable: and that the body is in the very likeness of the human, and mortal, and unintellectual, and multiform, and dissoluble, and changeable. *Phaedo*, 80b.[22]

Disengagement of the soul from the world of matter is a pivotal doctrine of Platonism and weaves together classical psychology and epistemology.[23] While the senses perceive the sensible, material, and continuously changing substances and can yield only *doxa*, the *nous* can perceive the intelligible, non-material, and permanent *eidos* that are the true basis of *episteme*.[24] The *nous*, however, can do this when it is disengaged from the limitations of material existence.

To further buttress the ontological realism of the Forms, Plato makes a distinction between *aistheton* (sensible) and *noeton* (intelligible), which is another way of distinguishing the Forms from sensible objects.[25] Defined as universals, the Forms are independent of their material embodiments and sensible imitations—a theme that runs through the *Phaedo* and Plato's other works.[26] The *nous*, by virtue of its being a disengaged reality, which Ṣadrā would later call the 'disembodiment of the soul' (*tajarrud al-nafs*),[27] is considered more akin to the world

of Forms. In other words, the soul and its objects of intellection belong to the same order of reality. This view forms the basis of the Platonic concept of *anamnesis* (recollection) but works equally well for the unification argument: knower, knowledge, and what is known all belong to the world of the *intelligibilia* (*al-ma'qūlat*)[28] making knowledge a mode of participation in the intelligible realm, viz., the Platonic Forms. As we shall see later, Mullā Ṣadrā incorporates these basic assumptions of Platonic noetics into his defense of the unification argument. In fact, Ṣadrā's definition of the soul as 'corporeal in origination, spiritual in subsistence' (*jismāniyyat al-ḥudūth rūḥāniyyat al-baqā'*) provides a noetic basis for the soul's proximity to and eventual unification with the intelligible world.

Plato's metaphysical theory of knowledge provides further material for a cogent statement of the unification argument. Given the fact that Plato does not draw any clear line between ontology and epistemology,[29] the question of what and how we know is intimately linked up with the question of what there is. For Plato and his medieval followers, the objective reality of the contents of intellection, which are, properly speaking, nothing other than the Forms, precedes the act of intellection. An intelligible form remains intelligible whether an intellect has ever intellected it or not. Now, this view reverses the relation between ontology and epistemology as we know it today, and turns knowledge into an effect of existence. Since the ontological reality of what there is is an *a priori* given and since this is the basis of all intellection, knowing implies taking a certain position toward existence.[30] In a Platonic sense, to understand the *concept* of X is to understand its Form of which the concept is only an approximation and a deficient imitation.[31] In other words, the reality of X can be perceived by standing in a cognitive relation to the Form of X, and this, for Plato, entails 'participation' (*methexis*) in the *eidos*, i.e., the intelligible archetype of X. The senses can yield important data about the perceptible properties of X. The knowledge (*episteme*) of X, however, is made possible by the participation of the 'intellector'

in the intelligible reality of X. The definition of something as 'square,' for instance, implies that the object defined partakes of the *eidos* of square-ness. This radically realist ontology of Platonic Forms underscores how we know, and asserts that all knowledge entails 'une assimilation à l'object connu.'[32]

This is the basis of *bios theoretikos* ('a life based on *theoria*/vision') Plato speaks about: intellection in relation to the Forms is contemplation in the full sense of the term[33]—a viewpoint shared by both Neoplatonist and Muslim philosophers. As we shall see later, *knowledge as participation* has a number of implications for Mullā Ṣadrā's theory of knowledge, and functions as a frame of reference for the unity of metaphysics, epistemology, and psychology. But it also takes us to philosophy as 'spiritual exercise'[34] where the line between being and knowing is deliberately and consistently blurred. I shall return to this subject in Chapter 3 when I discuss the epistemic possibility of mystical knowledge.

b. Aristotle and the 'Intellect from Without'

If Plato's noetics and metaphysics has played an indirect yet important role in the development of the unification argument, Aristotle, the 'first teacher' (*al-mu'allim al-awwal*) of the Muslim philosophers, has provided its first full-fledged formulation. This reading of Aristotle, again, goes back to Ṣadrā and not necessarily to the 'orthodox' Peripatetics because Ṣadrā, like his other medieval predecessors, knew and read Aristotle as the author of the *Uthūlūjyā*. The numerous references Ṣadrā makes to Aristotle show his desire to see Aristotle as a disciple of Plato, not as an intellectual renegade in spite of the fact he was fully and perhaps disappointedly aware of Aristotle's rejection of Platonic Forms as untenable.[35] Whether Ṣadrā discusses the temporal origination of the cosmos (*ḥudūth al-'ālam*), eternity of the soul, or substantial motion, his view of Aristotle is one that conforms to his overall concern to reconstruct philosophy as being illuminated by the 'niche of

prophecy' (*mishkāt al-nubuwwah*). Aristotle fits in this picture rather nicely as one of the 'pillars of wisdom' (*asāṭīn al-ḥikmah*).[36]

With this caveat in mind, let's turn to Aristotle himself. The principal passage that contains Aristotle's ambiguous and extremely condensed view on the issue is the *De Anima* 429–430, which has been singled out by some of his Greek and Muslim commentators as the most significant evidence for Aristotle's endorsement of the active intellect (*nous poietikos*). After discussing the *psukhē*, sensation and *phantasia* (rendered into Arabic as *khayāl*), Aristotle, who was still struggling to disassociate himself from his mentor Plato, turns to intellection as the highest form of perception, and asserts the radical incorporeality of the intellect. But he does this in such a way as to keep both Plato and his medieval followers wondering if he was really making a break. He establishes a similitude between sense and its sensible object on the one hand, and intellect and its intelligible object on the other:

> If thinking is indeed like sensing, then it would either be a process of being affected in some way by the object of thought or be some other thing such as this. So [the thinking part of the soul] should be incapable of being affected but capable of receiving the form [of the object of thought] and be potentially such as that [form] but not the [form] itself and the intellect should be related to the object of thought in a manner similar to that in which a sense is related to its sensible object. And, since the intellect [can] think every [object of thought], it must exist without being blended [with something else] in order that, as Anaxagoras says, 'it may rule,' that is, in order that it may know. [. . .] So the part of the soul which is called 'intellect' (by 'intellect' I mean that [part] by which the soul [can] *think* and believe) is actually none of the things prior to thinking. In view of this, it is not even reasonable that it should be blended with the body. *De Anima*, 429a[37]

If the intellect is absolutely free of matter, then it does not share any corporeal commonality with the particular physical objects it knows.[38] The intellect knows only the forms, i.e., the

intelligible forms that reside in material bodies implicitly and contingently. Before intellecting these forms, the intellect is not an actual reality. It is only potentially able to know things; otherwise we would have to claim that the intellect knows all things *a priori*. To emphasize this point, Aristotle gives the celebrated example of a wax tablet (*De Anima*, 429b), which potentially contains what is later to be written on it.

These assertions can be taken to be a logical result of the Aristotelian notion of hylomorphism, which underlies Aristotle's natural philosophy as well as epistemology. The fact that the intellect *extracts* universal forms from their material embodiments is predicated upon the hylomorphic idea that everything is composed of matter and form. As the principle of unity, intelligibility and universality in corporeal things, form is the medium by which the intellect knows, and eventually acts upon the world. By defining the intellect as a non-material substance, Aristotle takes an important step toward placing it in the world of forms, which are always defined as incorporeal. For some of Aristotle's Greek commentators and certainly for Ṣadrā, this is a position not far from asserting the unity of the intellect and the intelligible.[39] In fact, Aristotle says that in the case of 'objects without matter,' viz., the forms that are not conjoined with matter, the intellect and what it intellects are one and the same thing.

> We stated…that the intellect, prior to thinking, is in a certain way potentially the intelligible objects but is none of them actually; and it should [be regarded potentially] as [being] in a tablet which has no actual writing. This is indeed the case with the intellect. Moreover the intellect itself is intelligible like the [other] intelligible objects. For in the case of objects without matter, that which thinks and that which is being thought are the same, for theoretical knowledge and its knowable object are the same. *De Anima*, 429b–430a.[40]

The intellect as a substance disembodied from matter knows something when it perceives its form because the 'essence' of things is contained in their form. As Aristotle insists, we cannot

know matter (*hylé*) because it is pure potentiality.[41] All we *can* know is the form. As a matter of fact, all we *need* to know is the form because it is what makes things what they are. Furthermore, intelligible substances are intrinsically intelligible regardless of a subject intellecting them because they are always actual, i.e., they are never bereft of cognitive content. This explains partly why Aristotle defines knowledge as a case of 'being acted upon': what acts upon is the actual intelligible form and what is acted upon is the intellect, which is potentially capable of knowing all intelligible substances.[42] These plainly Aristotelian premises bring us to the shores of Platonism for it is an easy shift from extracting and appropriating forms-in-matter to participating in them. Some of Aristotle's later commentators and Muslim readers did not hesitate to take this step and interpreted even the most orthodox Aristotelian writings as lending support to the unification argument.[43]

There is further evidence to justify such a reading. In the *De Anima*, 430a 16–17, Aristotle gives his celebrated analogy of light to explain the relationship between vision and colors. This analogy has been singled out by later commentators as the most important clue for a proper understanding of the role of the active intellect in Peripatetic noetics. Simply put, the analogy explains how light makes vision possible: whether we are capable of vision or blind from birth, we cannot see in pitch darkness. We need the presence and *agency* of light, which is always visible by itself. The potential intellect needs a similar agency *vis-à-vis* the things it is capable of knowing. This is where the active intellect comes in and enables the potential intellect to know things in actuality by 'touching' them with its power of illumination. Just as light makes it possible for us to see the things around us, the light of intelligibility shed by the active intellect turns our potentiality to know into an actual state of knowing. In this model, we are prompted to know conceptually by the agency of something outside us, and the active intellect is accorded an ontological and epistemic priority in the process of intellection—a theme to which we shall return later.[44]

In *De Generatione Animalum*, 2.3, 736b 13–20 and 2.6, 744b 22, Aristotle uses the expression ‘intellect from without’ (*nous thurathen*), translated into Arabic as *al-‘aql al-ladhī min khārij*, to demonstrate the pre-discursive existence and ever-present actuality of the active intellect.[45] This seemingly simple assertion has led to one of the greatest controversies of the Middle Ages about the way in which the active intellect makes something potential actual. It is worth noting that the active intellect was introduced by Aristotle to fill in the gap created by his rather unsuccessful rejection of Platonic Forms as separate substances. Plato did not have to posit anything like an active intellect for he held that his Forms were already actual in the intelligible world and that we know them by participating in them.[46] Now, once we define forms only as forms-in-matter, then we have to explain how they can be ‘distilled’ or extracted, i.e., ‘abstracted’ (*tajarrud*) from their enmattered locations. Only an agent that is already removed from material embodiment can help us do that. This is what the active intellect does, and this is why ‘abstraction’ is so crucial to Aristotelian epistemology.

To recapitulate, the *in actu* intelligibility and independence of substances that can be known is an important component of the doctrine of the active intellect. Whether we envision a relation of unification (*ittiḥād*) or conjunction (*ittiṣāl*) between the active intellect and the individual human intellects or assume the active intellect to be completely independent of us or found partially in our souls,[47] the essential unity of that which thinks and that which is thought in the case of things that have no matter remains a solid argument in the Peripatetic tradition. In the *Metaphysics*, Aristotle reiterates this point:

> If thinking and being thought of are different, in respect of which does goodness belong to thought? For to be an act of thinking and to be an object of thought are not the same thing. We answer that in some cases the knowledge is the object. In the productive sciences, it is the substance or essence of the object, matter omitted, and in the theoretical sciences, the definition or the act of thinking is the object. Since, then, thought and the object of thought are not

> different in the case of things that have not matter, the divine thought and its objects will be the same, i.e., the thinking will be one with the object of its thought. *Metaphysics*, XII, 1074b–1075a[48]

One last point to which I shall return in Chapter II is the establishment of immateriality as a condition of intelligibility. Aristotle's claim that the knowledge of things is obtained when their forms are 'abstracted,' viz., detached from matter, creates a reciprocal relation between intelligibility and non-materiality: the more removed a thing is from its material conditions, the more intelligible it becomes. We may take this to be an endorsement of the idea that the realm of the *intelligibilia* is marked by its distinct non-materiality whereas the world of matter is construed to be in darkness and devoid of cognition or intelligibility. In Islamic philosophy, this idea would receive a more precise formulation but also generate a major problem for the defenders of 'abstraction' as a condition of knowledge. Ibn Sīnā, for instance, states that the further removed a thing is from its material accidents (*'awāriḍ*) and attachments (*lawāḥiq*), the more real it is because it is closer to its 'formal' (*al-ṣūrī*) reality. For Ibn Sīnā, 'all perception is the taking of the form of the perceived'.[49] Intelligibility as 'abstraction,' however, brings up a host of other problems. In fact, Mullā Ṣadrā, following Suhrawardī, would launch relentless attacks on the Peripatetic notion of knowledge as 'abstraction' (*tajarrud*), to which I shall turn in the next Chapter. As far as Aristotle is concerned, however, his version of the unification argument 'in the case of things that have no matter' has undoubtedly become a major source of inspiration for the posterity in their attempt to restate the Peripatetic system within the framework of a new philosophical outlook shaped by Alexander of Aphrodisias and Themistius (d.388) on the one hand, and by Plotinus, on the other.

c. Alexander of Aphrodisias: Beyond Orthodoxy and Innovation

Alexander of Aphrodisias's decisive role for the later development of Aristotelian noetics is well documented. With his commentaries on Aristotle's *Metaphysics* and *De Anima* as well as his own independent works, Alexander shaped largely the way the First Teacher was read and understood in the Islamic and Christian worlds during the Middle Ages. In addition, he is of particular importance to us because the first section (*faṣl*) of the first discourse (*maqālah*) of Ṣadrā's *Treatise on the Unification of the Intellector and the Intelligible*, whose translation is given at the end of the present work, bears the subtitle 'On the Degrees of the Theoretical Intellect According to the Account Given by Alexander of Aphrodisias' (*fī darajāt al-'aql al-naẓarī muwāfiqan limā dhakarahu iskandar al-afrīdūsī*). Many other references to Alexander in the Sadrean corpus testify to Ṣadrā's interest in Alexander as a truthful expositor of Arsitotle's teachings.[50] Yet the name Alexander has always evoked controversy as he has been on a pendulum between orthodoxy and innovation. Arguably, we owe this curious situation not only to Alexander as an individual philosopher but also to the city of Alexandria where a serious reconstruction of Peripatetic philosophy was already under way. We should remember that Alexandria, founded by Alexander the Great, was the center of Hellenistic culture where Pythagoreanism had a long history. Not surprisingly, such early neo-Platonists as Numenius (d. *c*.180 BCE), Ammonius Saccas (d. *c*.242), Plotinus (d.270), Porphyry (d.301), and Iamblichus (d. *c*.320) all hailed from Alexandria.[51]

Little is known about the life and intellectual career of Alexander of Aphrodisias. In all likelihood, he was from the city of Aphrodisias in Caria in southwestern Anatolia and flourished at the end of the second and beginning of the third century.[52] In spite of the scarcity of knowledge about his life and intellectual upbringing, his deep influence on the later interpretations of *Corpus Aristotelicum* is unmistakable.[53] This is borne out

especially by the wide popularity of his *Peri Nous* or *De Intellectu*,[54] to which Ṣadrā makes a number of references. Porphyry reports that Alexander, along with Numenius, was among the most important authorities on philosophy in the circle of Plotinus.[55] While modern scholarship considers Alexander to be a mainstream commentator loyal to Aristotle's philosophy in essence,[56] there are significant divergences and new themes in Alexander that herald the emergence of a new and even 'mystical' interpretation of the First Teacher.[57] One scholar of Islamic philosophy goes so far as to attribute the 'mysticisme rationaliste' of the Muslim Peripatetics-cum-Neoplatonists to Alexander's countenance of the conjunction (*ittiṣāl*) of the individual human intellect with the active intellect.[58] In fact, the doctrines of the passive and active intellects, unification (*ittiḥād*) of individual human intellects with the active intellect, Divine Intellect as the sum of all intelligible realities, and finally the identification of the active intellect with God are among the most controversial issues which have become part of the Peripatetic tradition with Alexander.[59]

It would not be a stretch to say that Alexander of Aphrodisias was the last Aristotelian 'pure and simple.' Yet, he also marks the beginning of something new. In a rather ironic way, the 'Neoplatonist turn,' which begins with the 'Ammonian syntesis'[60] and reaches a climax with the compilation of the *Enneads*, owes a great deal to Alexander as *the commentator*.[61] What is fascinating is how some of Alexander's Muslim readers and certainly Ṣadrā among them found no discomfort in reproducing him as a philosopher and commentator who could very well be read along with other Neoplatonists. This is precisely what Ṣadrā did vis-à-vis Alexander's defense of the unity of the intellect and the intelligible: instead of interpreting it as part of Aristotelian noetics with no (neo)Platonic overtones, Ṣadrā sees it as anticipating the Neoplatonist synthesis which he seeks to achieve through his defense of the unification argument. In fact, the findings of modern scholarship suggest that the Muslim philosophers were not at all off the mark in their reading of the

two systems of Platonism and Aristotelianism as two schools destined to be synthesized in one way or another.[62] In short, what happened to Aristotle happened to Alexander as well: they both were reconstructed literally, conceptually and textually within the matrix of the Neoplatonist turn.[63] Once this was done, it was relatively easy to reproduce an 'orthodox' Aristotelian metaphysics within the context of Neoplatonism without giving up Aristotle *in toto*.[64] To see the extent to which this is true or not, however, we have to turn to *Alexander Islamicus* as Ṣadrā saw him.

In the Islamic philosophical tradition, the works of Muslim Peripatetics are replete with references to Alexander of Aphrodisias. His most celebrated title was *ho exegetes*,[65] 'the chief interpreter' of the First Teacher. The title was used exclusively for him by both Simplicius and Philoponus and faithfully translated into Arabic as '*the* exegete' (*al-mufassir*).[66] His name has been mentioned in relation to the transmission of not only Peripatetic but also Stoic ideas into the Islamic world. Ibn Abī Uṣaybi'ah, for instance, attributes a number of works to Alexander that either discuss or respond to various Stoic themes and questions.[67] Sa'īd al-Andalusī, the author of *Ṭabaqāt al-umam*, mentions three names among Aristotle's most prominent successors: Themistius, Alexander of Aphrodisias, and Porphyry.[68] Alexander's *Peri Nous*, considered his most important work on noetics, was translated into Arabic in the school of Ḥunayn ibn Isḥāq, most probably by Ḥunayn himself, as early as the ninth century under the title *Fī'l-'aql*, and remained an important text for the study of Aristotle's *De Anima*.[69] The wide popularity of the *Peri Nous* is to be seen in the works of Muslim Peripatetics as well as in several works of Mullā Ṣadrā who quotes Alexander in support of his own interpretation of Aristotle's theory of the intellect.[70] That Alexander's works were 'best sellers' in the philosophical circles of the time is attested by Yaḥyā ibn 'Adīyy's lamentation that he was not quick enough to buy Alexander's two commentaries on

Aristotle in a collection of books, ‘all of which were then sold to a man from Khurāsān for three thousand dinars!’[71]

There is no easy way to map out Alexander’s influence on Muslim philosophers. The current scholarship on the subject is still marred by the relative absence of comparative textual studies and the sketchy outlines of the patterns of transmission from Greek into Arabic. Insofar as pre-Sadrean noetics is concerned, there is a sizable literature that argues for a historical connection between Alexander’s *Peri Nous* and al-Kindī’s *Risālah fī’-l ‘aql*, the first authoritative text on the intellect by a Muslim Peripatetic. According to this hypothesis, al-Kindī must have used Alexander’s work without naming it.[72] On one hand, this is justified in part by the obvious similarities between the two texts. The discrepancy between the tripartite division of the intellect by Alexander and the quadripartite division proposed by al-Kindī can be seen as a matter of difference in expression rather than in substance.[73] On the other hand, any direct relation between Alexander and al-Kindī has been called into question in view of a number of major differences between the two.[74] Among these, we can mention the classification and types of the intellect and Alexander’s identification of the active intellect with God—a view that has become a major source of controversy among the later Peripatetics.[75] Al-Kindī, for instance, does not use the expression *al-‘aql al-fa“āl*. Instead, he uses the phrase *al-‘aql al-ladhī bi’l-fi‘l abadan*.[76] Even though al-Kindī’s *al-‘aql al-awwal* can be interpreted as a version of the Aristotelian active intellect, he does not seem to have ever needed an active intellect to complete his noetics. It is therefore difficult to establish any direct link between Alexander of Aphrodisias and al-Kindī on this particular issue. At any rate, Alexander’s authority on how to interpret Aristotelian noetics appears to be fairly established for the ‘Kindī-circle.’[77]

The situation is not any different when we turn to Ibn Sīnā. The Chief Master’s major works, especially his early writings,[78] contain references to Alexander in places where Aristotle’s text appears to be in need of clarification or simply open to multiple

readings. In the *Najāt*, Ibn Sīnā, when talking about logical categories, discusses two views concerning the *muṭlaqāt* ('unconditional propositions') and describes Alexander as a *muḥaṣṣil*, i.e., the philosopher who has achieved the verification of logical truths.[79] Ibn Sīnā's reliance on Alexander for the critical issue of the active intellect and how it is related to individual human intellects shows beyond any doubt the honorable position he assigns to Alexander.[80] We find a similar situation in al-Fārābī to whom I shall return shortly. Ṣadrā presents Ibn Sīnā as both revering and struggling with Alexander on a number of issues. He notes that Ibn Sīnā had leaned toward Aristotle's view of the soul, as narrated by Alexander 'the Roman' (*al-rūmī*), that those souls that have stayed at the level of potential intellect cannot attain immortality after death. In one instance, Ṣadrā attributes the same view to Alexander himself.[81] But he hastens to add that Ibn Sīnā rejected this view in his other 'books and compilations.'[82]

The most notable and probably the only exception to the rule of treating Alexander as *the* commentator for the Muslim Neoplatonists is *the* commentator for the Latins, i.e., Ibn Rushd. Ibn Rushd has no qualms about accusing almost all of the later commentators of Aristotle including al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā of being 'Alexandrist' because of their distortion of the true spirit of Aristotle's philosophy.[83] For him, the Alexandrian interpretation of Aristotle, especially on the question of the active intellect and its relation to individual souls, is grounded in a spurious mysticism unwarranted by Aristotle's texts.[84] There are many other issues in Peripatetic logic, physics and cosmology over which Ibn Rushd remonstrates with Alexander and his Muslim 'students.' One such issue is the way Alexander interprets the Milky Way.[85] Compared to the celebrated question of an individual soul's relation to the active intellect, however, this is still a minor issue. Ibn Rushd seems to suggest that *Alexander mysticus* was the primary source of *Aristoteles mysticus*.[86] That this is no small matter is clear from the fact that Ibn Rushd wishes to go back to the pre-Alexandrian Aristotle and certainly

to the time before the Neoplatonists forced Aristotle to become his teacher's loyal student *again*. One could very well argue that it was not so much a specific view of Ibn Rushd as his overall concern to 'bypass' the Neoplatonist turn, to the extent such a thing was possible for any philosopher during the Middle Ages, that made him such a forgotten figure in the subsequent development of Islamic philosophy in the eastern lands of Islam. Ṣadrā appears to have no taste for any kind of rationalism pure and simple, and this explains, in part, why the Sadrean corpus contains virtually no references to Ibn Rushd.

Coming back to Alexander, his contribution to the development of Peripatetic noetics has been decisive, to say the least. We cannot venture into the history of this epochal event here as this would be an entirely different enterprise. As far as Ṣadrā's reliance on Alexander is concerned, this much can be asserted: Alexander presents an interpretation of Aristotle that can easily be reconciled with the Neoplatonist turn mentioned above. In a sense, Alexander is the gateway to the only Aristotle the Muslim philosophers knew or wanted to know: *Aristoteles Arabus*.[87] A significant phase in this process is the way Alexander turns the active or 'productive' intellect into a depository of all *intelligibilia*. In his own *De Anima*, Alexander makes full use of the light analogy used by Aristotle, and ascribes to the active intellect the onto-epistemic role of bringing the potential human intellect into full actuality and completion:

> In all things, that which is especially and supereminently what it is is the cause for other things of being such as they are. That which is especially visible, such as light, is the cause for other things of their being visible and that which is especially and primarily good is the cause for other things of their being good. Other things are judged good by their contribution to this. That which is especially and by its own nature object of thought is, it is reasonable to maintain, the cause of the intellection of other objects of thought. Such an entity would be the productive [i.e., the active] intellect. *De Anima* 88.26–89.6[88]

Ibn Sīnā translates Alexander's somewhat verbose language into a clearer statement about the causal agency of the active intellect:

> We say that the human soul may be intellecting (*'āqilah*) *in potentia*. Then it becomes intellecting *in actus*. Everything that emerges from the state of potentiality to actuality does so by virtue of a cause that is already actual. Here we have a cause that brings our souls vis-à-vis the *intelligibilia* from potentiality to actuality. It is the cause that bestows intellective forms and it can be only an intellect *in actus* that has the principles of intellective forms in a disembodied manner. Its relation to our souls is like the relation of the sun to our vision: just as the sun is visible *in actus* and by its own nature and through its light renders things visible that are not visible *in actus*, so is the relation of this intellect to our souls. Thus when the intellective power dawns upon the particulars that are in the faculty of imagination and the light of the active intellect in us which we have already mentioned shines upon them, they become disembodied from matter and their [material] relations. *al-Najāt*, pp. 234–235[89]

The light analogy, already known to Peripatetics from Aristotle's *De Anima* in a rather cryptic manner, is now used in full force by Alexander and his followers to demonstrate, *inter alia*, that the proper locus of the *intelligibilia* is the active intellect as a separate substance. This is something new and not easily traceable to Aristotle's text. Alexander's unorthodox novelty lies in his ingenious combination of the two types of intellect introduced in Aristotle's *Metaphysics 12* and *De Anima 3.5*.[90] This identification leads Alexander to cast the active intellect as the First Cause (*proton aition*) and *eventually* identify it with God or the Divine Intellect—a conclusion which the Muslim philosophers have consistently resisted for obvious theological reasons.[91] The two types of the intellect, i.e., intellect as an agent of permanent actuality and intellect as part of the human soul correspond to two types of intelligibles: Plato's transcendent Forms and Aristotle's immanent forms-in-matter or simply *nous* as *dunamis* and *nous* as *ousia*.[92] What

Aristotle's Greek commentators and his Muslim followers have done with these two types of intelligibles is a watershed event in the history of philosophy. Instead of reading Aristotle's forms-in-matter as *replacing* Platonic Forms, they treated them as two *separate* kinds of forms or ideas.[93] Plato's *eidos* thus comes back from the backdoor, and this is a most rewarding development for the Muslim Neoplatonists because a noetics that is not revised along some transcendent-Platonic lines would have landed them in a materialistic theory of the soul. Needless to say, Alexander plays a crucial role in this process. It is this creative synthesis, or distortion depending on how you look at it, that makes the active intellect the meeting point of noetics and theology. This, in turn, paves the way for a neat formulation of the so-called psychological and cosmological intellects of Neoplatonism as emerging from one single philosophical outlook.

Alexander's role does not end here. He goes on to present a further formulation of the unification idea and couches his argument in a language that gives support not just to conjunction (*ittiṣāl*) of some sorts but to unification (*ittiḥād*) proper. The simplest way of putting this is to say, as Alexander does, that 'intellect in act knows itself, because it becomes what it knows; and the objects it knows are forms independent of matter.'[94] This leads to the conclusion that 'any intellect that knows these pure forms [disembodied intelligibles] becomes identical with them in the moment of its knowing them.'[95] If by form we understand nothing more than Aristotle's forms-in-matter in a minimalist way, then the kind of unity Alexander formulates here would not take us to Ṣadrā's definition of unification. It would be only a case of perceptual abstraction. The moment we define perception of forms-in-matter as having a special proximity to the active intellect as the storehouse of the intelligibilia, however, we begin to walk on a new terrain. When the intellect in act perceives the active intellect through 'intellective vision,' it becomes 'identical' with it: 'At the moment when [our] intellect comprehends this supreme [i.e., the active] intellect in its act of intellective vision—when, I mean, it is actually knowing it—it becomes in

some way that supreme intellect. This is because knowing consists in a likeness to the form known [which the cognitive faculty assumes] in its act of apprehending that form.'[96] Alexander thus argues for an essential unity between *nous*, *noein* and *noeton* known in Latin as the unity of *intellectus, intellectere* and *intelligibile*. Interestingly enough, he repeats the same argument for sensation twice and constructs a similar pattern of unity between *aisthesis*, *aisthanestai* and *aistheton* translated into Latin as the unity of *sensus*, *sentire* and *sensible*.[97] This is exactly the same vocabulary as the Arabic *'aql*, *'āqil* and *ma'qūl* on the one hand, and *ḥiss*, *ḥāss*, and *maḥsūs*, on the other.

It is important to stress that in all of these processes of knowing, the active intellect remains 'separate' (*mufāriq*) and outside the soul.[98] The Muslim Neoplatonists including our own Ṣadrā accepted this interpretation of the active intellect without reservations notwithstanding the fact that Aristotle's other readers such as Themistius and St. Thomas Aquinas continued to hold that the active intellect is part of the soul and not a separate substance.[99] At any rate, the reworking of the notion of the active intellect along the foregoing lines brought Aristotle's legacy closer to Plato, paving way for Plotinus. In some curious ways, the Alexandrian interpretation of the unification argument became a subtext of Plotinus' celebrated doctrine that 'the intellectual beings are not outside the Intellectual-Principle.' Our next stop is thus Plotinus because of his rigorous reformulation of the unification argument as well as his deep influence, *a lá Theology of Aristotle*, on Ṣadrā.

d. *Plotinus Islamicus* and the Unification Argument

Plotinus (205–270) was virtually unknown in the Islamic world. His name, which could have been something like *Aflūṭīn*, *Aflūṭinus* or *Flūṭinus*, rarely appears in the Arabic sources, one of the known exceptions being Ibn al-Nadīm's *al-Fihrist*. The occasional references to 'the Greek Master' (*al-shaykh al-yūnānī*) in such classical sources of intellectual history as Abū

Sulaymān al-Sijistānī's *Ṣiwan al-ḥikmah*, Shahrastānī's *al-Milal wa'l-niḥal* and Miskawayh's *Jāwidan khirad* have been identified with some certainty as references to Plotinus.[100] In spite of his decisive role in the emergence of a Neoplatonizing Aristotle in the Islamic world, however, Plotinus has enjoyed the 'power of anonymity' more than any other major philosopher throughout the Middle Ages.[101] We owe this rather curious situation to a 'creative mistake'[102] that occurred when 'Abd al-Masīḥ ibn 'Abd Allāh ibn Nā'imah al-Ḥimṣī[103] translated parts of Plotinus' *Enneads* into Arabic as *Kitāb uthūlūjyā arisṭūṭālis* (*The Theology of Aristotle*) with extraneous material culled from Proclus' *Elements of Theology* and probably some other sources.[104] We also know that al-Kindī improved upon Ḥimṣī's translation.[105] The attribution of this work and the *Kalām fī maḥḍ al-khayr*, known in Latin as *Liber de Causis*,[106] to Aristotle appears to be a crucial step in the creation of the *Aristoteles Arabus*. The numerous references to Aristotle in the works of Muslim philosophers including those of Mullā Ṣadrā are as much references to Aristotle as they are to Plotinus.[107] By the same token, the term *al-shaykh al-yūnānī* is no less a reference to Plotinus himself than the *Uthūlūjyā* is to the *Enneads*.

What is important for our purposes, however, is that both the *Enneads* itself and the *Enneads* known to Muslims as *Uthūlūjyā* contain a rigorous defense of the unification argument. Since any full-scale analysis of Plotinian metaphysics is beyond the limits of the present work, the following remarks will be limited to the role *Plotinus Islamicus* of the *Uthūlūjyā* has played in Ṣadrā's construction of knowledge as a unity between intellect and its objects of cognition. The principal passages Ṣadrā quotes from the *Uthūlūjyā* in both the *Asfār* and the *Treatise on the Unification* contain a fairly complete presentation of Plotinus' views on the One, the intellect and the intelligible world. There are, however, two major divergences to be noted. The first is the absence of the Plotinian scheme of emanation in Ṣadrā. Ṣadrā spends an enormous amount of time on the temporal origination of the world (*ḥudūth al-'ālam*), and his own formulations leave

virtually no room for emanation.[108] This is also in tandem with the gradual disappearance of Plotinian emanationism in post-Avicennan Islamic philosophy. The second important point of divergence is how Plotinus' notion of the Divine Intellect as composite is redressed to avoid a serious theological problem.

The first important premise the *Uthūlūjyā* establishes for Ṣadrā is what we might call the 'principle of simplicity.' Plotinus held that an absolutely simple being or principle is necessary for the world to be what it is, viz., an organized, intelligible, unified, and integral structure. For a Platonist like Plotinus (and Ṣadrā), it was impossible to conceive the world in any other terms, the opposite of which would lead to chaos and disorder.[109] This simple being called the 'pure one' (*al-wāḥid al-maḥḍ*), which corresponds to Plotinus' One, generates things by intellecting them and sustains them in existence and orderliness by 'expanding' (*mabsūṭ*) into them. Even in terms of these two functions alone, the importance of absolute simplicity cannot be overemphasized: simplicity is what keeps together the composites which make up the world of sensible beings.[110] Without such an absolute simplicity, there would be no order, no intelligibility, hence no being. The passage Ṣadrā quotes from the *Uthūlūjyā* reads as follows:

> The pure one is the cause of all things but not a single one of them. It is the beginning [i.e., principle] of things, not all things. Rather, all things are in it whereas it is not in any thing.[111] Thus it is such that all things gush forth from it; their permanence and subsistence are with it; their return is to it. Someone may say: how can things derive from the expanding one in which there is no duality and multiplicity from a certain point of view? We say: because it is a pure expanding one, none of the things is in it. Since it is a pure one, all things gush forth from it. Thus it itself has not become an ipseity (*huwiyyah*)[112] but the ipseity has issued forth from it.
>
> I say that I shorten the [discussion of the] discourse about the fact that it is not one of the things, [because] I have seen all things [coming] from it. Even though things have gushed forth from it,

> the first ipseity, by which I mean the ipseity of the intellect, has gushed forth from it without an intermediary. Then have gushed forth from it all of the ipseities of things in the higher as well as lower world through the medium of the ipseity of the intellect and the intelligible world.
>
> Thus I say that the pure one is above completion (*tamām*) and perfection (*kamāl*). As for the sensible world, it is imperfect because it is generated from a complete thing, which is the intellect. The intellect is complete and perfect because it has generated from the true pure one, which is above completion. A thing that is above completion cannot be a deficient thing without an intermediary. Nor is it possible for a complete thing to generate its own like completely because generation (*ibdā'*) signifies deficiency. What I mean by this is that that which is generated cannot be at the same level as that which generates. It can only be below it. *Asfār*, III, 2, pp. 272–273; *Enneads*, V.2.1 with variations.

What this quote in its Arabic adaptation does is another fine example of hermeneutic adjustment that we see quite often in traditional philosophy. The text does not simply translate into Arabic whatever Greek material was available to the 'adaptor' al-Ḥimṣī. Rather, it glosses over and eventually bypasses a major theological challenge that arises from Plotinus' description of the Divine Intellect as a composite being. We should remember that Plotinus had made a distinction between the One or Good and the Divine Intellect. While attributing the terms of absolute simplicity to the One, he had introduced a duality or rather multiplicity in the Divine Intellect. Even though there is a unity of *noesis, noeton*, and *nous* in the Divine, this is still not the same kind of pure and absolute simplicity that belongs to the One. The Divine Intellect still thinks in terms of multiplicities because thinking is thinking *of* something and entails some sort of 'otherness.' Thinking is going out toward something. Whether directed at the self or the world outside the self, thinking implies duality and multiplicity.[113] In Plotinus' terms, 'this Intellect needs to see itself, or rather to possess the seeing

of itself…for the existence of something else is a necessary condition of seeing, and if there is nothing else, seeing is useless.'[114] This is predicated upon the idea that thinking implies some kind of a desire and thus deficiency: 'Knowledge is a kind of longing for the absent, and like the discovery made by a seeker. But that which is absolutely different remains itself by itself, and seeks nothing about itself; but that which explicates itself must be many.'[115]

In this sense, the Plotinian One or Good remains beyond being and thus ineffable,[116] because being implies something qualified by form or essence,[117] whereas the intellect, whether Divine or human, is bound to be multiple. This absolutely unconditional and ineffable nature of the One is the basis of Plotinus' *via negativa*: the One is always beyond what we can say of it. The basic question that one can ask about all negative theologies thus holds true for Plotinus as well: how can a principle so central to reality be something about which we cannot say anything? While this is a major issue for both Plotinus and his theistic followers in the Islamic and Christian worlds, he makes every effort to assert the One not as a negation but as 'something supremely positive'[118] so much so that it gives things their essence and existence, keeps them as they are but never becomes completely exhausted by them. This problem would continue to resonate in Islamic philosophy centuries later as Muslim thinkers, like their Jewish and Christian counterparts, sought to secure the Divine essence to be beyond the limitations of existence or language. At any rate, the theological challenge that this line of thinking poses for any theistic philosopher is obvious enough because to conceive multiplicity in the Divine Intellect is to jeopardize the absolute unity of the Divine itself. This challenge, however, does not seem to arise for the reader of the *Uthūlūjyā* because the Divine Intellect is constructed as *an aspect* of the One, which is now transformed into God.[119] For Ṣadrā, the self-imposed multiplicity of the Divine, which comes about through the degrees of manifestation, does not taint the absolute purity, oneness, and simplicity of the One God.

In spite of this seemingly 'minor' theological problem, the above passage asserts the independent existence of the intelligible world, and this is an important step toward the unification argument for it is eventually this world, rather than the active or the Divine intellect, with which the intellect is supposed to be united. This is borne out by the fact that Ṣadrā quotes one more long passage from the *Uthūlūjyā* under a section of the *Asfār* subtitled 'Concerning the View of the Ancients that the Soul Intellects Through its Unification with the Active Intellect.' This theme, already known to us from the other Neoplatonists, underscores Ṣadrā's defense of the unification argument in ways that are more important than the Aristotelian-Alexandrian affirmation of the unity of the individual intellect with the active intellect. Ṣadrā never admits any tension between unification with the world of Forms on the one hand, and unification with the active intellect on the other. Even in places where his considerations appear to allow some difference between the two, they never give us any clear idea as to how Ṣadrā continues to uphold both views without making some major adjustments. One point implicit in Ṣadrā's defense of the unification argument, however, is the collapse of the Peripatetic active intellect into the Platonic world of intelligible substances. Yet again, Ṣadrā never explains how he resolves this tension.

Coming back to the *Uthūlūjyā* and what Ṣadrā makes of it, the long passage that he quotes and which is worth translating in its entirety reads as follows:

> The higher world is the perfect living [reality] in which everything is contained because it has originated from the first perfect source. In it is to be found every soul and every intellect, and there is absolutely no indigence and need here since things therein are filled with richness and life as if it is life that exceeds and gushes forth. The life of these things issues forth from one single source, not just from one single heat (warmth)[120] or one single wind (smell). Rather, all of them are one single quality in which is to be found every taste.

The difference between life and the intellects here is due to the difference of the changes of life and the intellect. That is how different animals [or life forms][121] and different intellects have come about except for the fact that some of them are more luminous and perfect than others. Some intellects are therefore closer to the first intellect for which reason they have become more intense in luminosity, and some of them are second and third in rank. Some intellects that are found here have become divine, some rational (*nāṭiqah*), and some non-rational because of their aloofness from these exalted intellects. As for here [i.e., this level], all of them have intellect. That is why the horse has become an intellect, and the intellect of the horse is a horse. It is impossible for that which intellects the horse to be an intellector for man since this is not possible in the primary intellects. Therefore when the first intellect intellects something, it and what it intellects are one and the same thing. The first intellect does not intellect something that does not have an intellect [i.e., something that is unintelligible] but intellects it as a species of intellect and as a species of life. Therefore the particular life is not the nonexistence of [i.e., does not cease to be] life in a certain way. In the same way, the particular intellect is not the nonexistence of [i.e., does not cease to be] intellect in a certain mode.

If this is the case, then the intellect that we find in some living beings is not the nonexistence of the first intellect. Every single part of the intellect is all of that with which the intellect can be divided. Therefore the intellect of something, which is an intellect for that very thing, is all things in potentiality. When it becomes actualized, it becomes specific and then actualized. And when it becomes actualized in the last stage, it becomes a horse or another animal. Whenever life journeys into the lowest level, it becomes a living thing in the lowest and basest level. That is why whenever animal faculties reach lower levels, they become weak and some of their acts disappear, from which a meek and weak animal emerges. When it becomes further weak, the intellect existing in it deceits it, and the strong faculties become a substitute for its power just as some animals have nails and claws, and some have horns and some have fangs according to the degree of lack of power in them. *Asfār*, I, 3, pp. 340–341; *Uthūlūjyā*, pp. 150–151 with minor variations; *Enneads*, 6, VII, 9 with significant variations.[122]

Commenting on the above passages, Ṣadrā says that they 'clearly contain the investigation and illumination of all the points we argued for and established in this section except for the fact that some of his words [i.e., arguments] need explanation resulting from the ignorance of those who consider it [i.e., his view] and from the lack of their ability to grasp it.'[123] Among the points which Ṣadrā mentions and which is of interest to us is the generation of the intelligible world or the world of Forms as a separate realm of existence. As Ṣadrā's extensive discussion of the Platonic Forms (*al-muthul al-aflāṭūniyyah*) shows, he follows the main outlines of the *Uthūlūjyā* in securing the independent existence of the world of transcendent Forms. For Plotinus, the ideas (*eide*) represent the reality of things and establish them in concrete existence: 'It is clear that, being Intellect, it really thinks the real beings and establishes them in existence. It is, then, the real beings.'[124] In asserting that the intellect is the real beings, Plotinus is apparently trying to avoid an old problem in Platonic theology, i.e., whether the Forms are the thoughts of the Divine Intellect or not. This is an issue we cannot go into here.[125] It is, however, clear that Plotinus' 'ideas' or intelligibles are not mere concepts. As Plotinus puts it, the intelligibles 'are certainly not "premises" or "axioms" or "expressions."'[126] Rather, the intelligibles as 'thought' by the Intellect are real beings. In the world of the Forms, every intellect is a being and every being is an intellect.[127] After quoting another long passage from the *Uthūlūjyā* about the relationship between the intelligible and sensible worlds, Ṣadrā concludes that 'every cosmological being has a luminous and intelligible form in the world of the *intelligibilia* which man can attain only when he perceives the intelligibles as universals. If his perception of them is through the body, opaqueness, and darkness, then his perception would be deficient.'[128] The establishment of the intellect and intelligible forms as real beings thus underlies the unity of existence and knowledge in Ṣadrā's thought.

The last point I shall consider here briefly pertains to the way in which the unification argument is set up by its defenders to

combat the representational theory of knowledge as a rival view in classical epistemology. If Plotinus' premise that the intellect thinks real beings is warranted, then these beings or forms cannot be impressions or representations of something outside the intellect. There must be a unification of some sort between the intellect and what it thinks insofar as its self-intellection is concerned otherwise we will have to admit that the intellect receives its objects of intellection from outside. In Plotinus' words, '…if there must be a 'maker of this All,' he will not think what is in the not yet existent universe in order to make it. The objects of his thought must exist before the universe, not impressions from other things but archetypes and primary and the substance of Intellect…Intellect therefore really thinks the real beings, not as if they were somewhere else: for they are neither before it nor after it.'[129]

It seems clear that in articulating this view, Plotinus was arguing against a representational or 'impressional' theory of knowledge whereby intellection is made contingent upon the pre-existence of things from which the intellect abstracts intelligible forms *ex post facto*. As we shall see when we analyze Ṣadrā's relentless critique of knowledge as representation or 'picturing' (*al-'ilm al-irtisāmī*), which he attributes to the Muslim Peripatetics, he makes profuse use of this argument. While allowing knowledge as representation for the type of knowledge that requires a clear demarcation between subject and object, he dismisses it as totally inappropriate for self-knowledge on the one hand, and God's knowledge of things, on the other. As we shall see later, Ṣadrā comes back to these two types of knowledge over and over again to show the inadequacy of any concept of knowledge that is not based on knowledge-by-presence (*al-'ilm al-ḥuḍūrī*).[130]

As far as God's knowledge of things is concerned, a major point of convergence between Plotinus and Ṣadrā is their shared notion that Divine intellection implies ontological production. If God's knowledge of things precedes the existence of actual beings, then the impressionist model cannot apply to Him. Here

the idea of unification takes on a heavily theological significance. A similar position is developed *vis-à-vis* self-knowledge: true knowledge of the self is one in which there is no epistemic distance between knower and known. Intermediacy in self-knowledge implies deficiency and absence of presence and certainty. If we are to have true knowledge, which always comes back to self-knowledge, we have to investigate the conditions of unification in knowing ourselves and things outside us.[131]

To see how Ṣadrā develops these arguments and the extent to which he succeeds or fails in this, however, we will have to wait until we have completed our survey of Ṣadrā's sources of the unification argument in the Islamic philosophical tradition.

1.2. ISLAMIC PHILOSOPHY

The Muslim Peripatetics took a somewhat ambivalent position toward the idea of unification. Al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā endorsed it when applied to God's knowledge of things. But they strongly denied it if it meant identification between the individual human intellect and the active intellect on the one hand, and the intelligible world, on the other. There are, however, important variations. Al-Fārābī, for instance, asserts the unity of the intellect, the intellector, and the intelligible in the case of God more forcefully than Ibn Sīnā on the ground that the Divine cannot admit multiplicity. While vehemently denying unification between any two things, Ibn Sīnā leans toward accepting it in both the *Najāt* and his later work *al-Mabda' wa'l-ma'ād*. Mullā Ṣadrā draws attention to this 'contradiction' in Ibn Sīnā.[132] But as I shall discuss later, this may not necessarily be a contradiction. Ibn Rushd joins Ibn Sīnā in denying the unification of the intellect with the intelligible with his usual precision on the grounds that this is a clear deviation from the true spirit of Peripatetic philosophy. This part of our story, however, begins with al-Kindī for two reasons. First of all, al-Kindī was the first philosopher to produce a major work on the intellect in the

Islamic philosophical tradition. Secondly, he was acutely aware of the far reaching implications of accepting or denying unification.

a. Al-Kindī: The Beginning of the Problem in the Islamic Milieu

In the *Asfār*, Ṣadrā mentions al-Kindī only three times and never cites him among the defenders of the unification argument. The only place where he quotes from al-Kindī is when he talks about God's knowledge of the particulars. This leaves a lot of room for speculation as to why Ṣadrā gives such a small place to al-Kindī in his discussions of the intellect. Putting aside the quote that appears twice in the *Asfār*,[133] it is not clear if Ṣadrā was aware of al-Kindī's main works on the intellect. At any rate, al-Kindī has left us a short and condensed treatise called *Fī'l-'aql* ('On the Intellect'). The treatise is one of the foundational texts of Peripatetic noetics and was widely used by the posterity. In *On the Intellect*, al-Kindī elaborates on the Aristotelian idea that the soul as a cognitive capacity unites with the First Intellect (*al-'aql al-awwal*), and becomes an actual intellect, i.e., the *in actu* cognitive faculty that knows. The First Intellect represents full actuality and perfection, and brings the potential intellect into actuality. When the soul unites with the intellective form (*al-ṣūrat al-'aqliyyah*) through the medium of the First Intellect, it becomes identical with the intelligible form. In other words, when the soul appropriates the intelligible form of a tree, no epistemic distance is left between its cognitive act and the intelligible reality of the tree. In this sense, the soul as the intellect in actuality is both the intellect and what is intellected (*ma'qūlah*). As al-Kindī puts it,

> When the intellective form is united with it [the soul], the soul and the intellective form do not become two separate things because the soul is not divisible and thus does not allow difference [between itself and what it perceives]. When the intellective form unites with the soul, the soul and the intellect become one and the same thing.

> It is thus both the intellector (*'āqil*) and the intellected (*ma'qūl*). Therefore, the intellect and the intellected are one and the same from the point of view of the soul. al-Kindī, *Fī'l-'aql* in J. Jolivet, *L'Intellect*, p. 159[134]

This can easily be regarded as a straightforward endorsement of the unification argument. The last provision inserted at the end of the quote, however, prevents any such hasty conclusions because al-Kindī takes great care in defining his terms of unification. Insofar as the knowing soul is concerned, there is a relation of isomorphism between the intellect and the intelligible. In this minimal sense, the intellect is at once an intellecting subject and an intellected (i.e., intelligible) substance. But the First Intellect, which al-Kindī takes to be the totality of *intelligibilia*,[135] does not allow such a unity since it would imply the unity of a single soul with the whole range of the intelligible world, and land us in the notorious problem of monopsychism that there is only one *nous* or intellect (*unitas intellectus*), which all of the medieval philosophers were eager to reject.[136] From the standpoint of the First Intellect, the actual intelligible in the soul and the First Intellect are not identical in that the soul as the knowing subject does not become one with the First Intellect:

> As for the intellect which is always actual and which renders the soul an actual intellect after its being a potential intellect, it and its intellector (*'āqiluhu*) are not identical. Therefore the intelligible in the soul and the First Intellect are not one and the same from the point of view of the First Intellect. But from the point of view of the soul, the intellect and the intelligible are identical. al-Kindī, *Fī'l-'aql* in J. Jolivet, *L'Intellect*, p. 159[137]

We may presume that the distinction introduced by the clause 'from the point of view of the First Intellect' is intended to pre-empt any identification between the individual soul and the First Intellect. But then how do we explain the precise relationship between the two? If the First Intellect, as al-Kindī appears to

take it to be, is the depository of all *intelligibilia* and the intellect knows intelligible forms by becoming identical with them through the agency of the First Intellect, then a partial, if not complete, unification between the soul and the First Intellect is to be admitted. But it is precisely this conclusion that al-Kindī seeks to avoid otherwise, as Ibn Sīnā and Ibn Rushd would later insist, we would have to admit the unification (*ittiḥād*) as opposed to conjunction (*ittiṣāl*) of the human soul with the active intellect and the intelligible realm all at once. But then this would bring us back to the problem of monopsychism. We find no easy solution to this problem in al-Kindī. Neither does he pursue the issue any further. To see a much more elaborate discussion of the problem, we will have to wait until al-Fārābī.

Al-Kindī's distinction between the intellect and the intelligible vis-à-vis the First (later, active) Intellect, however, heralds the beginnings of a chequered problem in Islamic philosophy: how does the individual human soul know things through its conjunction with the active intellect? Although both al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā insist on the active intellect as the primary agent of knowledge, they disallow any unification between it and individual human souls. With al-Fārābī, the intellect takes on an ontological and cosmological significance in that it functions as a causal agent between the individual soul and the cosmos. This makes both ontology and cosmology part and parcel of Fārābīan epistemology. Al-Fārābī restates Aristotelian noetics within the framework of Plotinian emanationism, and assigns to the intellect the cosmological function of connecting the transcendent to the corporeal.

b. Al-Fārābī: Problem Restated

There are two principal texts in the Fārābīan corpus that contain an elaborate discussion of the intellect. They are *Mabādi' ārā ahl al-madīnat al-fāḍilah* ('Principles of the Views of the People of the Virtuous City'), cited hereafter as *al-Madīnah*, and *Risālah fī'l-'aql* ('Epistle on the Intellect'). Both texts are extremely

important and complement each other.[138] While *al-Madīnah* places the intellect within the context of al-Fārābī's cosmology and ontology, the *Risālah fī'l-'aql* focuses on the intellect in relation to noetics and psychology. And they both contain important references to the unification argument. Unlike Ibn Sīnā who was adamant to keep the word *ittiḥād* out of his discussions of the active intellect, al-Fārābī uses the word *muttaḥid* several times and attributes to Aristotle a loosely defined notion of partial identification between the human soul and the active intellect.[139] He even says that this idea 'has been referred to in the *De Anima*,'[140] While it is not at all clear which *De Anima* al-Fārābī is referring to here, it is presumably to that of Aristotle. But neither Aristotle's nor Alexander's *De Anima* ever use the term conjunction or unification.[141] This appears to be a case where al-Fārābī is reading a clearly Neoplatonic terminology into Aristotle, and in all likelihood the *Uthūlūjyā*, which we know for sure he made use of, was among his sources for this particular reading. All of this is important and admittedly puzzling because al-Fārābī eventually rejects the unification argument while adopting its vocabulary.

Al-Fārābī's theory of the intellect is predicated upon a principle accepted almost unanimously by Muslim philosophers: knowing is not only a noetic but also a cosmological process. Following Aristotle's extremely short and ambiguous remarks about the 'intellect from without,' al-Fārābī posits the active intellect as the penultimate agent of all conceptual knowledge. Every potentiality, he reasons, needs an active agent to realize it. Since the active intellect is always fully actualized because it never ceases to have cognitive content, the active intellect itself is the necessary, if not sufficient, condition for the actualization of the potential intellect. Consequently, all conceptual knowledge is reducible to the agency of the active intellect. In the context of Islamic philosophy, this assertion is not without religious ramifications: the active intellect, when translated into the language of theology, would correspond to Archangel Gabriel, the angel of revelation, whom al-Fārābī denotes by using two

other names taken from the Qur'ān, viz., *al-rūḥ al-amīn* ('the Trusted Spirit') and *rūh al-quds* ('the Sacred Spirit').[142]

Having established the active intellect as the penultimate agent *and* content of knowledge, al-Fārābī redefines Peripatetic noetics within the framework of Plotinian cosmology and identifies the active intellect as the tenth intellect. According to the emanationist model,[143] which al-Fārābī adopts from the *Uthūlūjyā*, the Divine Intellect thinks Its own essence out of Its abundance in infinitude and perfection. The world of manifestation overflows (*fayḍ*) from the Divine Being by a 'necessity of nature' for it is in the nature of the Divine not to be jealous and give of itself. For al-Fārābī, this Neoplatonic 'necessitarianism'[144] proves the utter richness and independence of the First to which the existence or non-existence of the universe adds nothing.[145] Out of the self-intellection of the Divine, the first intellect is generated, which is now capable of conceiving both itself and its creator. The two-fold ability of the first intellect to conceive itself and its origin leads to the generation of the second intellect on the one hand, and to the generation of the outermost sphere, on the other. The second intellect, by intellecting its author, i.e., the First Being, generates the third intellect, and by intellecting itself, the sphere of the fixed stars. This process continues in successive stages until the ten intellects and the corresponding spheres of Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, the Sun, Venus, Mercury, and the moon are created.[146]

In this familiar framework of emanation, the tenth intellect functions as the cosmological link between the celestial spheres that correspond to the world of the *intelligibilia*, and the sublunar world that corresponds to the corporeal world. al-Fārābī states, on the authority of Alexander the Commentator, that 'it appears to follow from Aristotle's view that the active intellect not only governs man, but that it also governs the natural bodies below the sphere of the moon, with the aid of the heavenly bodies. And also that it is the heavenly bodies that provide these natural bodies with motion, while the active intellect provides them with the forms towards which they move.'[147] With the tenth intellect,

we step into the essence of Fārābīan noetics in which intellect as a disposition of the soul is now linked to the intelligible world through the medium of the active intellect. As al-Fārābī explains in the *Risālah fī'l-'aql* in greater detail, the potential intellect (*al-'aql bi'l-quwwah*), also called the material or hylic intellect (*al-'aql al-hayūlānī*), becomes actualized when it conceives an actual intelligible. When the potential intellect perceives the *intelligibilia* in actuality, it becomes an actual intellect (*al-'aql bi'l-fi'l*), now able to 'abstract' intelligible forms.

It is important to note that the intelligible forms, when disembodied by the actual intellect, obtain a higher mode of existence and become disembodied substances (*al-jawāhir al-mujarradah*). When they exist as actual intelligibles in the intellect, they gain a mode of existence proper to the disembodied world of the intellect. Once this level of disembodiment is reached, the actual intellect rises to even a higher level of intellection, which al-Fārābī calls the 'acquired intellect' (*al-'aql al-mustafād*).[148] The difference between the actual and the acquired intellects is that whereas the former thinks substances that have some attachment to matter, the latter can perceive intelligible forms that have absolutely no connection with matter.[149] The acquired intellect is the final stage of human intellection and paves way for conjunction with the active intellect. When the acquired intellect conjoins with the active intellect, it partakes of the intelligible world in a more substantial way and becomes 'united (*muttaḥidah*) with the active intellect in a certain way (*'ala'l-wajh*).'[150] This is the ultimate goal of all cognition and the highest degree of human perfection and happiness, which al-Fārābī describes as the point at which the Prophet reaches revelation from Archangel Gabriel.[151] This is also what secures the immortality of one's personal soul. The souls that have not reached this level run the risk of not enjoying immortality.[152]

In *al-Madīnah*, al-Fārābī summarizes these points as follows:

> Since the First is not matter and has no matter in any way whatsoever, it is an intellect in actuality in its substance; for what prevents the form from being an intellect and from intellection in actuality is the matter in which a thing exists. When a thing in its *wujūd* does not need matter, it becomes, in its substance, an intellect in actuality; and this is the case with the First. It is, then, an intellect in actuality (*'aql bi'l-fi'l*) and an intelligible (*ma'qūl*) through its substance because what prevents something from becoming an intelligible in actuality (*bi'l-fi'l ma'qūlan*) and an intelligible in its substance is matter (*māddah*). It is thus intelligible from the point of view of its being an intellect; for the One whose ipseity is intellect is intellected by the One whose identity is intellect. And, in order to become an actual intelligible, it does not need another essence outside itself, which would intellect it, but, in fact, it by itself intellects its own essence. It becomes an intellector (*'āqilan*) and an intellect in actuality by intellecting its own essence, and an intelligible in actuality by virtue of its essence intellecting. al-Fārābī, *al-Madīnah*, p. 70

The framework that al-Fārābī adopts to account for his version of the unification argument is unmistakably both Aristotelian and Neoplatonic in that it is based on the idea that whatever is disembodied from matter is capable of abstraction and thus intellection. In this view, the more removed a thing is from the confines of material existence, the closer it is to self-intellection. The sensibles are imperfect imitations of intelligibles because they are, unlike the universals, subject to change and corruption. Sense-perception changes according to the individual, climatic conditions, the position of what is sensed, and so on. By contrast, the intelligible substances including concepts and judgments go by the principle of constancy and universality. They gain universal validity and application to the degree to which they are disembodied from matter and corporeality. That is why, from an epistemological point of view, the Platonic Ideas or Forms are cognitively more reliable than sensible objects.[153] In fact, al-Fārābī goes so far as to say that we cannot 'know' sensible objects through intellectual perception because the mind can conceive only the forms that have been disengaged from material

objects: 'As for the occurrence of the form in the intellect, it happens when the form of a thing exists in the intellect as singular and unattached with matter…and as disengaged from all with which it is connected. In short, sensible objects are not known; sensibles are parables for what can be known.'[154]

Intellection as immateriality underlies the innate ability of the self-thinking of disembodied substances. This establishes self-intellection as the basis of the unity of the intellector and the intelligible in the case of the First which, due to its pure immateriality, is in a perpetual state of self-intellection. al-Fārābī makes his case as follows:

> By the same token, in its being an intellect in actuality and an intellector in actuality, it does not need an essence which it would intellect and acquire from the outside. Rather, it is an intellect and an intellector by intellecting its own essence. Thus the essence that is intellected is that which intellects, and it is an intellect from the point of view of its being an intelligible. Therefore it is intellect, intelligible, and intellector, all being one single essence and one indivisible substance. Man, for instance, is intelligible, but what is intelligible in his case is an intelligible not in actuality but only in potentiality. He then becomes an intelligible in actuality after the intellect has intellected him. What is intelligible in the case of man is not always that which intellects. Nor is the intellect, in his case, always what is intellected. Our intellect, insofar as it is an intellect, is not what is intellected. We are intellectors not because our substance (*jawharunā*) is an intellect but because what we intellect through the intellect is not what constitutes our substance. But the First is not like this; in the case of the First, the intellect, intellector, and the intellected have one meaning and are one single indivisible substance. *al-Madīnah*, pp. 70–72[155]

In the *Risālah fī'l-'aql*, al-Fārābī identifies six meanings of the word *'aql* and points to its various uses. The first meaning is what the 'majority of people' (*al-jumhūr*) understand by the word intellect or reason, viz., someone being rational, logical, understanding, and so on.[156] Al-Fārābī links this meaning of intellect to 'being good' and making the right ethical choice

between good and evil. In this sense, 'what the majority mean by the word intellect is the same as what Aristotle means by *al-ta'aqqul*', i.e., *phronesis*, which can be translated as prudence and thoughtfulness. Accordingly, the rational or intelligent man (*al-muta'aqqil*) is the one who has the 'right view.'[157] Closely linked to this definition is the second meaning of intellect, which the Mutakallimūn use in their arguments. By and large identical with common sense, intellect as prudence leads the intelligent or rational person to make morally right choices or prevents him from committing evil.

The third meaning of intellect can loosely be described as natural or innate perception. It refers to the intuitive ability of the soul to know with certainty the universals and principles of demonstration without having recourse to rational analysis or analogy. Here, al-Fārābī invokes the Qur'ānic term *al-fiṭrah* or primordial nature according to which God has created human beings. He traces this meaning of intellect to Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics* (*Kitāb al-burhān*) and states that these intuitive and non-discursive principles are the foundations of all theoretical sciences.[158] Intellect as innate and intuitive perception is further developed into a full faculty of moral and rational choice. This is the fourth meaning of the word *al-'aql*, which al-Fārābī traces back to Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* (*Kitāb al-akhlāq*). This intellect is a part of the soul (*al-nafs*) and fully articulated into an actual faculty when the universal principles of intellectual-moral prudence are combined with long experience.[159]

The fifth meaning of intellect is without doubt the most important and most comprehensive of all the six. Al-Fārābī divides this intellect into four categories as potential (*al-'aql bi'l-quwwah*), actual (*al-'aql bi'l-fi'l*), acquired (*al-'aql al-mustafād*), and active intellect (*al-'aql al-fa''āl*). Athough al-Fārābī's treatment of the four intellects does not differ in any essential way from that of al-Kindī, it presents a more articulate and detailed analysis. Al-Fārābī's masterly analysis of the four meanings of the so-called psychological intellects as opposed to the 'cosmological intellects' has had such an enduring impact

on Islamic philosophy that Mullā Ṣadrā quotes, almost verbatim, a good part of the *Risalāh fī'l-'aql* in the *Asfār* when discussing the various meanings of intellect.[160]

Since Ṣadrā is eager to incorporate al-Fārābī's elaborate analysis of the intellect into his own noetics and enlist him as a defender of the unification argument, what al-Fārābī has to say about these four intellects is of particular importance to us. Now, the idea that the intelligibles are to be disembodied from material objects implies that sense data as the basis of empirical knowledge are intrinsically imbued with an intelligibility of sorts. When these intelligible forms are disembodied from their material carriers by virtue of an intellect already in full actuality, the potential intellect becomes an actual intellect. The potential intellect assumes a higher mode of being proper to the ontological mode of intelligibles in actuality. We may consider this to be the first phase in the intellect's becoming assimilated into the world of the *intelligibilia*. Al-Fārābī's 'acquired intellect' points to a higher mode of intellectual exercise where the intellect can perceive the intelligible forms of things completely free of any material and sensual attributes: it can form concepts and judgments without the agency of the senses. This places the person who has reached the acquired intellect over those who have not, and this is not without political implications in al-Fārābī.[161] In short, human intellection is completed and perfected by the direct agency of the active intellect.[162]

An important component of al-Fārābī's concept of the intellect is the framework of potentiality and actuality. This clearly Aristotelian notion underlies a good part of the ontological and epistemological considerations of Muslim philosophers, and asserts that actuality implies perfection and, by derivation, hierarchy.[163] In his commentary on the *De Anima*, Ibn Rushd says that the 'words 'capability,' 'reception,' and 'perfection' are used as synonyms when applied to material bodies.'[164] Consequently, intellectual perception implies actuality and actuality, in turn, signifies perfection. This makes the role of the active intellect

all the more important, and ties it to Peripatetic physics and cosmology.

Al-Fārābī's discussion of the six types of the intellect culminates in the Divine Intellect or what he calls the 'First Intellect' (*al-'aql al-awwal*)—an expression most probably taken from al-Kindī.[165] All other intellects are interlocked to the Divine intellect in a hierarchical way. Here the actuality-potentiality framework fits in perfectly with the Divine Intellect operating through the entire spectrum of knowledge. Al-Fārābī posits the First Intellect as the beginning and end of all intellection, whether human or celestial, by defining the Divine Being as the epitome of self-intellection that results in cosmological production. Furthermore, the First Intellect is the 'principle of all principles (*mabda' al-mabādī*) and the first principle of all beings. This is the intellect that Aristotle mentions in letter *lām* (Book Lambda) of *Metaphysics*. Each one of these [intellects mentioned above] is an intellect but this one is the First Intellect, the First Existent (*al-mawjūd al-awwal*), the First One (*al-wāḥid al-awwal*), the First Truth (*al-ḥaqq al-awwal*). Others become intellect only by virtue of it in a certain order.'[166]

After quoting a good part of al-Fārābī's *Risālah fī'l-'aql*, Ṣadrā refers to al-Fārābī as lending support to the unification argument. This conclusion, however, is not necessarily warranted by al-Fārābī's texts. As far as the unification argument is concerned, al-Fārābī does not go any further than admitting unification for the First Intellect as a condition of the self-intellection of the Divine. Furthermore, his appropriation of the Peripatetic notion of knowledge as 'impression' (*irtisām*) poses serious challenges for Ṣadrā. In fact, Ṣadrā severely criticizes al-Fārābī for proposing such a 'fallacious' theory about God's knowledge of things.[167]

Yet, Ṣadrā, who makes every effort to construct a genealogy for his own purposes, makes the most out of al-Fārābī's partial endorsement of unification. What is particularly important for Ṣadrā is to prove the idea that man is capable of becoming a 'simple active intellect' (*'aql basīṭ fa''āl*) in whom all intelligibles

are united.[168] Al-Fārābī's view of the Divine Intellect makes an arguably convincing case for the principle of simplicity according to which a simple intellect contains all levels of intelligibility in a 'simple manner.' As the depository of intelligibles (*ma'qūlat*) and beings (*mawjūdāt*), the Divine Intellect encapsulates intelligible substances without jeopardizing its own absolute unity. The idea of unification is thus asserted one more time. This is also underlined by the essential identification of God's Essence with His Names and Qualities.[169] The end result is the unification of the Divine Intellect with Its own contents without there being any trace of multiplicity.[170] Ṣadrā takes this conclusion a step further and applies it to human intellection, which al-Fārābī appears to be hesitant to do. Al-Fārābī's reluctance to apply the idea of ontological simplicity to human intellect becomes even more resolute with Ibn Sīnā and Ibn Rushd. Ṣadrā, however, insists on reading al-Fārābī as agreeing with what he himself has to say about the matter, thus giving us another example of his hermeneutic appropriations.

c. Ibn Sīnā: Ṣadrā's Greatest Challenge

Ibn Sīnā's concept of the intellect (*al-'aql*) does not differ in any essential way from that of al-Fārābī. As it is the case with Ibn Sīnā in many other instances, however, he represents a turning point for the history of the unification argument in Islamic philosophy. He explains and rejects the theory with a sense of urgency, for its acceptance or denial has far-reaching consequences for a host of issues in traditional philosophy including the immortality of the individual soul, its relation with the intelligible world, and the unity and integrity of God as the simplest of all beings.[171] Ibn Sīnā's interest in the issue is more than historical. His criticism of unification as a general philosophical concept constitutes perhaps the most serious objection against it. Considering Ibn Sīnā's authority in Islamic philosophy, this presents a special challenge for any advocate of the idea of unification. This explains in part why Ṣadrā spends an enormous

amount of time to come up with a point-by-point response to Ibn Sīnā's criticisms. On his part, Ibn Sīnā is ruthless in his derogation of the defenders of the unification argument. If Ṣadrā is to maintain unification as a meaningful idea at all, he has to overcome the barrier of the Chief Master.

According to Ibn Sīnā, it is nothing more than a poetical uttering to claim that something becomes identical with something else without either the former or the latter being destroyed. Here is how he formulates his position:

> A group of people who [claim to] pass on[172] [the teachings of Aristotle] thought that the intellecting substance, when intellecting an intelligible form, becomes [identical with] it. Suppose that the intellecting substance thinks A. According to their claim, it becomes identical with A, viz., the object of intellection (*al-ma'qūl*). Is it then the same as it did not think A? Or, this did not happen to it. If it is like before [i.e., before its intellection], then it does not make any difference whether it intellected it or not. If this did not happen to it, then it has not changed into it or it is the same as itself. If it did change into it and [its] identity (*al-dhāt*) remained the same, then, in contrast to their claim, this is like other transformations (*istiḥālāt*). If it remains itself, then its identity has disappeared and something else has come about, not that it has become something else. When you ponder over this, you would realize that this [transformation] requires a common matter (*hayūlah mushtarakah*) and a composite rather than simple renewal.
>
> Also, when it intellects A, then B, does it remain the same as when it intellected A? Unless [we were to say that] it does not make any difference whether it intellected B or not, or it becomes something else, in which case what was mentioned [as a problem] will necessarily come back.
>
> (…)
>
> Learn this well: to claim that something becomes something else neither by way of transformation from one state to another, nor by way of conjoining with something else so that a third thing may come out of it, but in such a way that a single object becomes

> another single object, is poetical nonsense with no meaning. *Al-Ishārāt wa'l-tanbīhāt*, Vol. 3, pp. 292–295[173]

The gist of Ibn Sīnā's objection can be glimpsed from his definition of 'something becoming something else (*yaṣīrū*).' As Ṣadrā notes, Ibn Sīnā allows only two kinds of 'becoming.' The first is the kind of change where a substance, while preserving its essential identity, takes on a new quality or quantity when, for instance, a black object becomes white or a hot object becomes cold. This is what Ibn Sīnā means by 'transformation from one state to another.' When applied to quantitative change, this corresponds to 'rarefication' (*takhalkhul*) and 'condensation' (*takāthuf*).[174] The same analogy applies to water becoming ice or evaporating into air.[175] It is important to note that this kind of change applies primarily to cases of increase or decrease in the accidental qualities of substances. It does not imply a total transformation whereby a substance ceases to be what it is and becomes something else due to some radical change in its quantity. In this sense, substances, as long as they are substances, do not change but take on new and additional qualities. To emphasize this point, Ibn Sīnā distinguishes 'transformation' (*istiḥālah*) from generation (*kawn*) and corruption (*fasād*). He then hastens to add that taking on new qualities does not imply transformation in substance: 'Since this transformation does not cancel out the nature of the species [to which a particular substance belongs], this is not a transformation that takes place in the substance.'[176]

The second kind of change can be described as a more radical version of the first whereby two substances conjoin and a third substance, essentially different from the first two, emerges. This entails the destruction of the two initial substances and the emergence or generation of a new one.[177] Ibn Sīnā reasons as follows:

> When something becomes something else, then, when it becomes that something, it is either existent or non-existent. If it is [assumed to be] existent, then the second thing too is either existent or non-

> existent. If it is existent, then they are two [separate] existents, not one existent. If it is non-existent, then this existent has become non-existent, not some other existent. And this is absurd. If the first thing has become non-existent, then it has not become something else but non-existent and a different thing has come about. In this case, how can the soul become the forms of things?'[178]

It is precisely this kind of change that Ibn Sīnā invokes here to reject the claim that when the soul knows intelligible substances, it becomes identical with them. The two definitions of 'becoming' proposed by Ibn Sīnā imply the physical destruction of a substance when it undergoes a substantial transformation. Obviously, this is more than taking on new accidents.[179]

At this point, Ibn Sīnā draws a sharp distinction between unification (*ittiḥād*) and conjunction (*ittiṣāl*)—a distinction that runs through the entire Avicennan corpus. For him, the precise meaning of unification is the 'occurrence of a numerically single entity from the conjoining (*ijtimā'*) of multiple entities' and the 'conjoining of the subject with the predicate in a single essence like the composition of man from body and soul.'[180] In addition, Ibn Sīnā accepts unification as logical predication as in the case of the 'participation of multiple things (*al-ashyā'*) in a single essential or accidental predicate.'[181] This last quote refers specifically to the logical context in which Ibn Sīnā accepts unification. While Ṣadrā insists on an ontological framework centred around the primacy of existence (*aṣālat al-wujūd*), Ibn Sīnā confines his remarks to a strictly logical and predicative frame of reference in which to define something as having more than one quality does not involve the idea of ontological intensification (*tashaddud*), which is precisely what Ṣadrā wants to establish as the proper ontological meaning of unification. By confining unification to logical predication, Ibn Sīnā avoids attributing any ontological significance to it.

Ibn Sīnā further argues that the soul cannot become 'identical' with any intelligible form; otherwise there would be no room left in it to receive other forms. In such a scenario of unification without differentiation, both the soul and the intelligible form

cease to be what they are. For Ibn Sīnā, to claim otherwise is to forsake reason and take refuge in mere poetry, 'mystical utterances' and sophistry. While these qualifications convey Ibn Sīnā's radical opposition to the principle of unification, they also allude to the fact that the unification argument is not without mystical implications. After all, Ibn Sīnā's insistence on *ittiṣāl* as opposed to *ittiḥād* can be seen as a carefully calculated reaction to Plotinus and Porphyry.[182] In fact, Ibn Sīnā identifies Porphyry and the 'Porphyrians' as the source of this 'metaphysical deception':

> There was a man among them known as Porphyry who wrote a book on the intellect and the intelligibles, which is praised by the Peripatetics. All of it is gibberish. And they know very well that neither they nor Porphyry himself understand it. *al-Ishārāt wa'l-tanbīhāt*, Vol. 3, p. 295
>
> The soul conceives itself and this conception makes it an intellect, intellector, and intelligible. But its conception of these forms does not make it so. Because the soul [as long as] its substratum is in the body always remains a potential intellect even though it becomes actual in regards to some [intelligibles]. What is said about the soul becoming the intelligibles themselves is in my view impossible. And I have never understood their claim that something becomes something else [in terms of essential identification], nor have I grasped how this happens.
>
> (…)
>
> The person who has deluded[183] people the most concerning this matter is the person who has composed the *Isagogy* for them. He [i.e., Porphyry] was bent on speaking words of fantasy and Sufi poetry and contenting himself and others with imagination.[184] For this, the people of discernment point to his books on the intellect and the *intelligibilia* and his other writings on the soul. True, the forms of things inhere in the soul and contain and embellish it. And the soul becomes like a place for them through the medium of the material intellect. Now, if the soul were to become a form for an existent in actuality and the form become the intellect, which is by its essence in actuality, and furthermore if the form were to have no

> capacity to receive anything, for the capacity of reception is in the receiver, then it would follow of necessity that the soul has no ability of accepting another form or any other thing whereas you see it receiving a form other than this one. If this other [i.e., first form] does not contradict this [i.e., second] form, then this is really strange for in this case receiving and non-receiving would become one and the same thing. If it does contradict it, then the soul, if it is the intelligible form, has become something other than itself. Quoted from the *Shifā'* in *Ittiḥād*, *Majmū'ah*, pp. 81–82.[185]

Before we look more closely at Ibn Sīnā's objections, it should be noted that according to Ṣadrā, Ibn Sīnā's denial of unification (*ittiḥād*) between any two things results from his univocal ontology which does not allow intensification and diminution in the *wujūd* of things. Within the context of Avicennan ontology, when something becomes something else, this takes place through the destruction (*fasād*) of the original substance and the emergence of a new one (*kawn*) rather than through the ontological intensification or diminution of the existence (*wujūd*) of that thing. Being aware of this point, Ṣadrā restates the primacy (*aṣālah*) and gradation (*tashkīk*) of existence before responding to Ibn Sīnā's specific arguments against unification. Here is how he defends his position against the Chief Master's attack:

> There are two points we have to know before delving into the critique of what the Master and others have said to reject the unification between the intellector and the *intelligibilia* in a general and specific way. The first is that existence in everything is the principal reality in existentiation, and it is the principle of its particularity, the source of its quiddity, and the measure of its essence. Existence belongs to the category of things that allow intensification and diminution in terms of perfection and imperfection, and it has essential qualities and modes in every degree of intensification and diminution other than what it had before.
>
> The second [point]: as motion and transformation take place in quality and quantity, it also occurs in the formal substance (*al-*

> *jawhar al-ṣūrī*),[186] which is connected to matter in a certain way. Motion in every category is necessitated by a single existence that is continuous, individual and gradual, and has, in every presumed moment of the time of this motion, a specific delimitation among the limits of existence, which exists neither before nor after it [i.e., motion]. *Ittiḥād* in *Majmū'ah*, p. 82

Having rejected unification as illogical, Ibn Sīnā proposes the model of 'conjunction' (*ittiṣāl*) to explain the relation of identity between any two things. In contrast to unification, conjunction consists of the juxtaposition and coming together of two or more things without being transformed to one another or something else. In the context of logical predication, it simply refers to the existence of a 'common definition' (*ḥadd mushtarak*) between two things that are conjoined in this way.[187] In this regard, conjunction stresses continuity while its opposite disjunction (*infiṣāl*) expresses discontinuity.[188] Ibn Sīnā makes full use of this concept to explain the relationship between the soul and the active intellect. In fact, he accepts the idea that the soul knows intelligible forms through its conjunction with the active intellect. This, however, does not go as far as unification:

> They [i.e., those who uphold unification] may also say that the rational soul, when intellecting something, intellects it through its conjunction (*ittiṣāl*) with the active intellect. This is certainly true. [But] they claim that its conjunction with the active intellect is such that it itself becomes the active intellect since it becomes the acquired intellect (*al-'aql al-mustafād*). This is so because the active intellect conjoins with the soul and the soul [as potential intellect] becomes acquired intellect. They thus stand between either making the active intellect divisible, with which one thing is conjoined after another, or making it a single conjunction by which the soul becomes a perfect being able to attain every intelligible [present in the active intellect]. *al-Ishārāt wa'l-tanbīhāt*, Vol. 3, p. 294

This passage reveals the main outlines of Ibn Sīnā's concerns about the unification argument. If the soul is allowed to become ontologically united with the active intellect in the way the

'Porphyrians' understand it, then we have to accept two grave consequences.[189] First of all, if we attain unification with the active intellect, then we would be in a position to know the entire range of intelligible realities present in the active intellect.[190] But this goes against common sense because no finite being can know everything there is to know. Furthermore, if complete unification with the active intellect grants us the possibility of appropriating the intelligible world in its entirety and since intelligibles are not devoid of ethical content, then we would also attain all the virtues attainable by human beings all at once. It is not difficult to see the eschatological consequence of this premise: if unification with the active intellect enables us to unite with all of the forms, knowledge and virtues present in the active intellect, then we would also be united with all of the 'perfect souls' that have united with the active intellect before us. If, as Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī says, we become 'united with all the intellecting beings,'[191] then we would be united with the prophets and the philosophers who have attained unification with the active intellect.[192]

The second consequence pertains to a possibility that no medieval philosopher has ever wanted to concede, and it is the divisibility of the active intellect. If every rational soul, i.e., material intellect which becomes an acquired intellect (*'aql mustafād*) through the agency of the active intellect attains unification with it, then the active intellect becomes divisible according to the number of potential intellects that are supposed to unite with it. But since the active intellect is totally free of matter and division applies only to things-in-matter, this conclusion must be rejected. Just like the previous conclusion which Ibn Sīnā rejects *in toto*, this view is also fraught with theological implications. If the active intellect is allowed to be divisible, then all other separate beings (*al-mufāraqāt*) will be susceptible to division. This would not only render a good part of Ibn Sīnā's metaphysics dysfunctional, because the basis of intelligibility is incorporeality, but also endanger the unity of God who is the highest of the separate beings.[193] After all, the

active intellect, which is one, does not become ‘many’ numerically when multiple intellects conjoin with it. At this point, the analogy of light used by Aristotle and repeated by Ibn Sīnā comes quite handy: just as light remains ‘one’ when it shines upon multiple objects and is not affected by them, the active intellect maintains its oneness when ‘[its] light…dawns upon…the faculty of intellection.’[194]

The foregoing objections by Ibn Sīnā should not lead us to think that he rejects the unification of the potential intellect with the active intellect when it is understood as a state of the mind or as ‘happening in the mind.’ Ibn Sīnā was certainly aware of Aristotle’s endorsement of this meaning of unification in the *De Anima* in the case of ‘things that have no matter.’ As a result, he does not hesitate to apply unification in this limited sense to the individual human intellect on the one hand, and to the Divine Intellect, on the other. In the ‘Notes,’ he says that

> what they [those who defend the unification argument] say about the intellect, the intellector, and the intelligible being one thing is true only in the case of the intellect. In other things, the intellect is one thing, the intellector is one thing, the intelligible is one thing, and the conception of the intellect of the intelligible is another thing. As for Aristotle’s view found here and in other places that knowledge and what is known are one and the same thing, it refers to the [mental] form of what is known, which is impressed upon the knower just as the form of what is sensed (*al-maḥsūs*) is impressed upon the sense. *Ta‘liqāt*, p. 105[195]

Yet, in all of this, the acquired intellect represents the highest level of intellectual perfection the soul can attain because ‘with the acquired intellect, the genus of animality and the species of mankind are completed whereby the human faculty (of intellection) becomes akin to the primary principles of existence in its entirety’.[196] In short, there is conjunction, ‘touching,’ dawning and affecting but no ontological identification between the active intellect and individual human soul.

The matter, however, does not end here. Ibn Sīnā takes a somewhat different approach toward Divine self-intellection and, like al-Fārābī, asserts the essential unity of the Divine Intellect with its objects of intellection. Elaborating on the Aristotelian idea that anything that is not in matter has intrinsic intelligibility, he describes the Divine both as a self-intellect (*'aql bi'l-dhāt*) and self-intelligible (*ma'qūl bi'l-dhāt*). The Divine knows Himself and other things through Himself or, more accurately, through His self-knowledge. God is not a subject intending to some objects; otherwise we would have to attribute ignorance to God *before* He intends to objects of knowledge outside of His essence. Ibn Sīnā draws attention to this point in *al-Mabda' wa'l-ma'ād* when he writes that 'the Necessary Being is self-intelligible and intellect by itself…every form that is not in matter is like this, and the intellect, the intellector, and the intelligible are one.'[197]

Furthermore, in both the *Najāt* and *al-Risālat al-'arshiyyah*, Ibn Sīnā comes back to this point and uses a language that prefigures Suhrawardī's concept of self-knowledge and knowledge-by-presence (*al-'ilm al-ḥuḍūrī*). Here, Ibn Sīnā uses the term knowledge (*'ilm*) and its derivatives. But as he points out, in this particular context the words 'knowledge' and 'intellect' are interchangeable. The passage is worth quoting in its entirety.

> Know that He knows by His essence and that His knowledge, His being known (*ma'lūmiyyatuhu*), and His knowing (*'ālimiyyatuhu*) are one, and He knows all other than Himself and everything there is to know. He knows everything by a single knowledge, and He knows them in such a way that His knowledge does not change according to the existence and [or] non-existence of what is known.
>
> The explanation of this is that, according to what we have already mentioned, He is one and above all causes. The meaning of knowledge (*'ilm*) is the establishment of a truth disembodied from the veils of corporeal existence. When it is firmly established that He is one and disembodied from the corporeal body and its

> attributes, then this truth is in a certain way established for Him, and for whosoever such a disembodied truth is established, he is a knower (*‘ālim*). This [knowledge] does not have to be His essence or anything other than Him because His essence is not absent from Him. It then follows that He knows His own essence.
>
> The fact that He is knowledge (*‘ilm*), knower (*‘ālim*), and what is known (*ma‘lūm*) can be explained as follows: knowledge consists of the disembodied truth. When this truth is disembodied [from matter], it becomes knowledge. When this disembodied truth belongs to Him, is present to Him, and is not veiled from Him, then it follows that He is a knower. When this disembodied truth is established only through Him, then he is known by various expressions. Insofar as His essence is concerned, knowledge, knower, and the known are one. *al-Risālat al-‘arshiyyah*, p. 8

Having stated God's knowledge of things on the basis of the concept of truth as ‘presence in the knower,’ Ibn Sīnā turns to self-knowledge as a paradigm case of the unification of the knower and the known. One's unmediated consciousness of oneself establishes a perfect epistemic unity.

> Your self is capable [of proving this point]: when you know yourself, what you know is either yourself or something else. If what you know is other than yourself, then you do not know yourself. If what you know is yourself, it follows that both the knower and the known are your own self. When the form of your self is pictured in your soul, then your self becomes knowledge. When you turn and look back upon your self through reflection, you will not find a representation of the truth and the quiddity of your self for a second time so as to lead you to the consciousness of multiple selves.[198] When it is firmly established that He intellects His essence, and that His intellecting His essence does not add anything to His essence, it follows that He is knower, knowledge, and the known without there being any multiplicity attached to Him through these attributes. There is no difference between knower (*‘ālim*) and intellector (*‘āqil*) since both consist of the absolute negation of matter. *al-Risālat al-‘arshiyyah*, p. 8[199]

This quote seems to establish Ibn Sīnā's wholesome acceptance of the unification idea. Considering Ibn Sīnā's passionate refutations of the 'Porphyrians,' however, there seems to be some kind of a disconnect in his thought. If unification is to be rejected without qualifications as mere sophistry and poetical non-sense, then how are we to understand Ibn Sīnā's eventual endorsement of it in the case of self-knowledge and Divine intellection? Three possibilities can be considered here. The first is to say that Ibn Sīnā contradicted himself and eventually accepted the unification argument. This is the view shared by Suhrawardī and Ṣadrā.[200] In the *Talwīḥāt*, Suhrawardī discusses Ibn Sīnā's view on the possibility, or lack thereof, of the unification of the intellect with the intelligible and says that 'Ibn Sīnā, the greatest of all the later philosophers, narrated this view from Porphyry and dishonoured him in a way that does not suit the nobility of either of them. In spite of this, he clearly claimed the unity of the soul with the intelligible form in *al-Mabda' wa'l-ma'ād* and in some of his other books. Then he finally realized the fallacy of this view.'[201] In a similar vein, Mullā Ṣadrā expresses his puzzlement over Ibn Sīnā's contradictory position and claims that Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī approved Ibn Sīnā's view because his main purpose in his commentary on the *Ishārāt* was to explain the principles of Aristotelian philosophy rather than criticize the Chief Master.[202]

The second possibility is to see this as an evolution of Ibn Sīnā's thinking on the issue. The fact that the unification argument as applicable to self-knowledge and to God appears in Ibn Sīnā's later works seems to support this hypothesis. There are instances where Ibn Sīnā's thought does display such an evolution. But this hypothesis is marred by the fact that in the *Shifā'* Ibn Sīnā makes several references to the unity of intellect, intelligible and intellection as long as the soul is in the body, i. e., as long as the unification in question refers to an internal state of the mind, not its unification with the active intellect. Furthermore, Ibn Sīnā's objections against the 'Porphyrians' remain unchanged to the end.

The third possibility, which seems to be more reasonable than others, is that Ibn Sīnā distinguished between two meanings and applications of the unification argument from the very beginning and held them valid at two different levels. It is clear that he rejects unification when it is applied to soul as potential intellect because, in addition to the arguments mentioned above, there must always be some potentiality in the soul. The acquired intellect does not become one with the intelligibles if this is understood to be unification with the active intellect itself. But if what we mean is the unification of the acquired intellect with the intelligible in view of its own perception of an actual intelligible, then this is allowed because this does not cause any of the problems Ibn Sīnā cites.[203] This is clearly stated in the examples Ibn Sīnā gives about the self's knowledge of itself and, by derivation, God's knowledge of things. In short, once Ibn Sīnā's major concerns about unification as ontological identification are removed, it is only natural for him to fall back on unification as epistemic conjunction. In this sense, Ibn Sīnā seems to go back to the initial baptism of the problem at the hands of the First Teacher, which was a simple idea of the unification of the soul with its objects of intellection at the moment of perception. Yet what Aristotle had to say about it, which was incidentally secondary to his whole argument in the *De Anima*, became so complex in the wake of the Neoplatonist turn of Greek and Islamic philosophy that Ibn Sīnā could not remain indifferent to it.

Before closing this section on the Muslim Peripatetics, we should discuss briefly Ibn Rushd the 'commentator.' Ṣadrā does not mention Ibn Rushd in his genealogy of the unification argument. As a matter of fact, the name Ibn Rushd is virtually non-existent in Ṣadrā's corpus. The reason for this deliberate absence of Ibn Rushd in most of the later Islamic philosophy is too complicated to consider here. Ibn Rushd's lonely struggle to create a pre-Neoplatonic Aristole on the one hand, and the course of post-Avicennan Islamic philosophy on the other seem to have contributed to Ibn Rushd's diminishing popularity among the

posterity. Ibn Rushd was extremely suspicious of the ‘mystical’ tendencies which he believed the Alexandrian commentators of Aristotle introduced into the mainstream Peripatetic thought. He was so critical of this ‘distortion’ that he occasionally accused both al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā of being ‘Alexandrist’ and distorting the true teachings of the First Teacher.[204] Like Ibn Sīnā, Ibn Rushd accepts the idea of conjunction with the active intellect as a condition of human knowledge. Yet he remains undecided as to whether the active intellect is also the formal and final cause of the material intellect. He was probably concerned that having the active intellect as an object of thought may lead to the much stronger notion of *ittiḥād* rather than *ittiṣāl*—a distinction he maintains throughout his writings.

At the end, Ibn Rushd concurs with the possibility of conjunction with the active intellect but never fully works out how the soul is supposed to have a relation with the active intellect in the same way matter is conjoined with form.[205] In addition to the counter-arguments which we already have in Ibn Sīnā, Ibn Rushd introduces an argument from causality against unification. The soul cannot have perfect union with the active intellect for the active intellect is a cause for the material intellect. A cause generates an effect but does not *replace* it. The question thus turns into how a potential and perishable substance becomes substantiated and immortal through its conjunction with an actual and separable substance.[206]

d. Suhrawardī: On the Way to Ṣadrā

Outside the Peripatetic tradition, the most important challenge to the unification argument came from Shihāb al-Dīn Suhrawardī, the founder of the School of Illumination. The fact that Suhrawardī joined the battle as an articulate ally of the Peripatetics is somewhat surprising because the concepts of self-knowledge and knowledge-by-presence which make a forceful entry into the Islamic philosophical scene with Suhrawardī appear to entail, at least according to Ṣadrā, a wholesale

acceptance of unification. This point is well noted by Ṣadrā, and his first reaction is to downplay the significance of Suhrawardī's objections as no more than Peripatetic ruminations, implying that Suhrawardī's own illuminationist views on the issue lend support to the unification argument. In fact, Suhrawardī himself says when discussing God's knowledge of things that he has written *al-Mashāri' wa'l-muṭaraḥāt* as a Peripatetic work and his own views on the issue are to be found in the *Ḥikmat al-ishrāq*.[207] This may prompt us to think Suhrawardī's properly *ishrāqī* works may contain an entirely different approach. As we shall see shortly, however, we find little assurance in Suhrawardī's most important *ishrāqī* work *Ḥikmat al-ishrāq* that he upholds unification (*ittiḥād*) as a possibility in the process of knowledge.

In his Peripatetic works, Suhrawardī, following the broad outlines of Peripatetic physics and ontology, clearly rejects any unification between two things. We can talk about admixture (*imtizāj*), conjunction (*ittiṣāl*) or 'unitive composition' (*tarkīb majmū'ī*) between two entities, says Suhrawardī, but not unification (*ittiḥād*). When I know the tree in front of me, i.e., when I have a direct vision of the intelligible form of the tree, I do not cease to be myself nor does the tree cease to be a tree. Both of us remain distinct and intact throughout the process. Suhrawardī states this essentially Avicennan point in the *Talwīḥāt* as follows:

> [54] Some people have thought that when the perceiver perceives something, he becomes [identical with] it. Some other people have thought that the soul perceives things through its unification (*ittiḥād*) with the active intellect. You have already learnt from the previous arguments that two things do not become one except through admixture, conjunction, or unitive composition. This is one of the qualities of [physical] bodies. When we say that A becomes B, does A remain the same and then we have B, thus both of them becoming multiple entities? Or is it rather that A is destroyed and B has not come into being, in which case there is no unification (*ittiḥād*) between the two? …When the soul thinks of A, does it remain the

> same as it was before [it thought of it]? If so, then there is no union or the establishment [of a new being]. Or, perhaps the soul is destroyed and something else has come into being, in which case there is again no unity [obtained between the soul and its object of intellection]. *Kitāb al-talwīḥāt*, pp. 68–69

In the *al-Mashāri' wa'l-muṭaraḥāt*, another Peripatetic work, Suhrawardī reiterates the same point in a similar way, focusing this time on perception itself:

> [201] A group of people have thought that perception is of such a nature that when someone perceives something, he himself becomes the form of that thing. You know the fallacy of this from what has passed before by way of allusion to the fact that a thing by itself does not become something else. If the first thing remains together with the origination of the second, then we have two separate things. If the first ceases to exist and the second comes about—or the first remains and the second does not come about—then neither of them has become the other. It might be objected that black becomes white and air becomes water. But black-qua-black does not become white or water-qua-water air. Rather, this form disappears from the carrier of the form for water-ness, and the form of air-ness comes about in it. In the same way, blackness disappears from the body qualified with blackness, and whiteness comes about in it. In both cases, the locus (of the forms) is the same. Now, if a form has come about but not a soul—or the soul has remained the same and not a form—then there is no perception (*idrāk*). If both of them have remained, then there are two of them. Furthermore, your self-conscious substance does not change all the time. It is rather one single permanent thing before [perceiving] a form, or with it, or after it, and the form comes about through its permanence. You are yourself with or without perception. Hence, no such thing as unification (*ittiḥād*). *Kitāb al-talwīḥāt,* pp. 68–69[208]

The two passages above make clear in what sense Suhrawardī interprets the word 'unification' (*ittiḥād*). For him, unification between two things entails the destruction of two discrete substances and the origination of a new one. In this sense, unification cannot be allowed without generation (*kawn)* and

corruption *(fasād*).[209] Applying the same set of principles to how the mind comes to perceive things, Suhrawardī makes another patently Avicennan salvo and repeats by and large what Ibn Sīnā has to say about the unification of the soul with the active intellect:

> [202] A group of people thought that when our souls perceive something, they perceive them through unification with the active intellect so much so that our souls become the active intellect. This [view] is false. We have already explained that two things do not become one except through conjunction (*ittiṣāl*) or admixture, or taking [the form of] unitive composition. No other way is possible. We shall mention the meaning of unification in the case of the disembodied beings (*al-mufāraqāt*) and what they require. As for the view about the particularization of the active intellect, [it claims] that the soul conjoins with the active intellect one part after another and it perceives one thing after another. Or still, when the soul perceives one thing and becomes one [with the active intellect], through this [perception] it perceives other things. Both options are false. *al-Mashāri‘ wa'l-muṭaraḥāt,* p. 475

A similar point is made toward the end of *al-Mashāri‘ wa'l-muṭaraḥāt* where Suhrawardī inserts a separate section (paragraph 221) just before concluding the book with his testament (*waṣiyyah*), and calls it ‘Concerning the Path of the Divine Philosophers’ (*al-ḥukamā' al-muta'allihīn*). This paragraph is of particular importance for our current discussion, for Suhrawardī comes back to the question of unification after making an Illuminationist liaison between ‘tasting’ and ‘perception’: ‘Some people have thought that by these lights (*anwār*), we mean the conjunction and unification of the soul with the Originator (*al-mubdi‘*). It was already demonstrated that unification is impossible except [if] what is meant by it is a spiritual state (*ḥālah rūḥāniyyah*) proper to the disembodied beings (*al-mufāraqāt*), not physical conjunction and mixture, neither of which is in itself false.’[210]

Both quotes above may lead us to think that Suhrawardī holds a different view on unification insofar as disembodied and purely spiritual beings are concerned. He even says that 'the unification that exists among the disembodied lights is certainly an intellective unification (*al-ittiḥād al-'aqlī*), not a physical one (*jirmī*).' But he does not explain what he means by 'intellective unification.' Furthermore, he quickly qualifies his statement in the following paragraph:

> Do not think that the disembodied lights (*al-anwār al-mujarradah*) become one after being disengaged [from matter], for two things do not become one. If both of them have remained [the same], then there is no unification. If both of them have ceased to be, there is no unification. If one of them has remained [the same] and the other has ceased to be, then there is no unification again. There is no conjunction (*ittiṣāl*) or admixture (*imtizāj*) except in corporeal bodies. The disengaged realities do not cease to be, and they are distinguished intellectively through their consciousness of themselves and their lights and their illuminations. *Ḥikmat al-ishrāq*, pp. 228–229[211]

The foregoing quotes make a convincing case for our initial assertion that Suhrawardī rejects unification even in his Illuminationist works especially if what is meant by unification is substantial identification. As in the case of Ibn Sīnā, Suhrawardī's forceful rejection is not a fortuitous decision; it has everything to do with the fundamental presuppositions that underlie his essentialist ontology. That is why Suhrawardī, just like Ibn Sīnā, allows unification as denoting the 'intellective state' of the mind at the moment of actual perception. The prime cases of this are the knowledge of the self and, by extension, God's knowledge of things. In both cases, there is no epistemic gap between the knower/perceiver and the known/perceived. To state briefly, Suhrawardī's argument from self-knowledge rests on the idea that one's consciousness of oneself is based on a first-order knowledge in that my consciousness of my 'I-ness' (*anā'iyyah*) is not different from my actual I-ness.[212] I know

'my-self' through this essential I-ness, not through a secondary image or form (*mithāl*) except when I reflect upon this image itself as a second-order concept. Otherwise, as Quṭb al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī points out, I would have to refer to my-self as a 'he/it,' not as an 'I.'[213]

Furthermore, since knowledge is the presence (*ḥuḍūr*) of what is known to the knower without any veils and since one can never be absent to oneself ontologically, all self-knowledge is based on the essential identity of the knower and the known. That is why Suhrawardī says that 'whoever perceives himself is a pure light, and every pure light is manifest (*ẓāhir*) to itself and perceives its essence,'[214] Commenting on this paragraph, Shahrazūrī, Suhrawardī's biographer and first commentator, says that 'perceiver, perceived and perception are one here just as intellect, intellector and intelligible are one.'[215] Quṭb al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī whose *Durrat al-tāj* is clearly more Avicennan than Suhrawardian, concurs with Shahrazūrī's conclusion but uses a more suggestive analogy: 'His [i.e., the Necessary Being's] relation to other things is like the relation of the ray of the sun to things other than itself, by virtue of which they become illuminated. But He is not in need of other things…. It should be known that a being disembodied from matter is not veiled to itself. Therefore, its own existence is exactly the same as its own intelligible-ness (*ma'qūliyyah*) and its intellect-ness (*'aqliyyah*) is the same as its own essence. Thus its existence is intellect, intellector, and intelligible.'[216]

What we have here is a case very similar to what we encountered in Ibn Sīnā: unification as an internal state of the mind at the moment of perception is a necessary component of both Peripatetic and *ishrāqī* epistemologies. Since God does not think or know things through 'images' apart from their essences but knows them directly and 'presentially,' unification also applies to God.[217] One important novelty in Suhrawardī is that since unification with the active intellect does not play a major role in the *Ishrāqī* tradition, Ibn Sīnā's passionate rebuttals against the 'Porphyrians' do not make any appearance in

Suhrawardī and his commentators. What remains as a major problem for Ṣadrā is then the fact that Suhrawardī develops a theory of knowledge that has no references to and, in fact, need for the unification idea. Ṣadrā's great challenge is to show that his theory of knowledge, which depends largely on Suhrawardī's masterful analyses of knowledge by presence, does require unification. The only way Ṣadrā can do this is to link the unification argument to his ontology. It is in this sense that Ṣadrā takes Suhrawardī's denial of unification to be a necessary outcome of his essentialism which allows gradation only in quiddities. One way of broaching this rather extensive subject is to explain how differentiation or disparity comes about in the first place. In his commentary on Suhrawardī's *Ḥikmat al-ishrāq*, Ṣadrā states this point as follows:

> The Shaykh (i.e., Suhrawardī) has assumed that disparity (*tafāwut*) takes place between two things in terms of perfection and deficiency in their shared quiddities without regard to any other condition concerning difference (*faṣl*) or accident. The truth is that a single concept (*mafhūm*) does not possess disparity from the point of view of its meaning (*ma'nā*). Disparity can be only in reference to more intensity and weakness through the modes of actualization (*al-ḥuṣūlāt*) and concrete beings (*al-wujūdāt*) because existence allows disparity in [terms of] perfection and deficiency.[218]

Mullā Ṣadrā thus comes back to the notion of ontological intensification and argues that the differences between him and Suhrawardī stems from different ontologies. Ṣadrā introduces a number of new formulations to overcome the stiff categories of Peripatetic and Suhrawardīan physics and attempts to 'de-solidify' the physical world-order to fully work out his gradational ontology. That is why he comes back to existence (*al-wujūd*) to explain the failure or unwillingness of previous philosophers to accept the idea of unification. Implicit in this is the pivotal Sadrean idea that the unification argument can be defended if knowledge is re-cast in terms of existence and its modalities (*anḥā' al-wujūd*). In a typical passage of the *Asfār*,

Ṣadrā posits gradation-in-existence (*tashkīk al-wujūd*) as the *sine qua non* of the unification argument:

> The realization of this matter [i.e., the unification of the intellect and the intelligible] is impossible except through the principles that were mentioned in the beginnings of this book [i.e., the *Asfār*] concerning the view that *wujūd* is the principal reality in existence and the quiddity is derived from it. It is certain that *wujūd* allows intensification and diminution, and whatever is strong in existentiation (*qawīyy al-wujūd*) becomes more inclusive and encompassing of universal meanings and abstract intellective quiddities. When *wujūd* reaches the level of the simple intellect which is completely disengaged from the world of corporeal bodies and quantities, it becomes all of the *intelligibilia* and all things in a manner more virtuous and nobler than what they are based upon. Whoever has not tasted this path cannot understand the simple intellect which is the source of all detailed sciences. That is why you see most of the virtuous people finding it very difficult and unable to verify it in spite of their deep involvement in following the sciences of wisdom such as Shaykh Suhrawardī in the *Muṭaraḥāt*, *Talwīḥāt*, and *Ḥikmat al-ishrāq*, who has clearly rejected this view, and Imam [Fakhr al-Dīn] al-Rāzī and those who are in their state and class. *Asfār*, I, 3, pp. 373–374

* * * *

The goal of this chapter has been to show that the concept of knowledge as unification has been a constant challenge for both classical and medieval philosophers. Its definition and application to different fields of philosophy varies from one philosopher to another. Taking a position for or against the unification argument, however, does not always follow a steady logic. A particular philosopher's approval or rejection of it in itself may or may not reveal much about his larger metaphysical presuppositions. In spite of its central place in traditional noetics, it is not a reliable measure against which one's philosophical predilections can be discerned. The examples of Alexander of Aphrodisias, who defended the idea, and Suhrawardī, who rejected it with as much

force as that of Ibn Sīnā, attest to this point. Furthermore, for some philosophers, the unification idea was not essential at all. They either had nothing to say about it or simply discussed it as a secondary issue.

With Ṣadrā, however, the history of the unification argument reaches a climax. Many of Ṣadrā's major philosophical claims either lead to the unification argument or issue from it. In fact, Ṣadrā's ambitious attempt to define knowledge in terms of existence and its modalities could not have been possible without the unification argument. Ṣadrā is so acutely aware of this that every one of his detailed analyses and defense of unification is preceded by a restatement of his gradational ontology. This shows, among other things, that Ṣadrā could not have bridged the gap between existence and knowledge in his thought without articulating and defending some version of the unification argument. His historical references to those who either defended or rejected the idea of unification underscore this point. Our interest in the history of this idea, of which I gave only a sketchy account here, is then mainly the same as that of Ṣadrā: history is relevant to the extent to which it helps us understand the philosophical problem we are grappling with. We will take up this issue in the next chapter and see how the idea of unification is closely interwoven into Ṣadrā's ontology.

NOTES

1. Also in the *Metaphysics*, 1072b and 1074b–1075a.
2. Shams al-Dīn al-Shahrazūrī, *Rasā'il al-shajarat al-ilāhiyyah fī 'ulūm al-ḥaqā'iq al-rabbāniyyah*, ed. Necip Görgün (Istanbul, Turkey: Elif Publications, 2004), Vol. III, p. 405.
3. I shall make one exception to this rule and mention Ibn Rushd briefly as he represents another major challenge to the unification argument.
4. See, for instance, *Asfār*, I, 2, pp. 329–335, 342–346, and 353.
5. The third section of the second part of the *al-Futūḥāt al-makkiyyah* is entitled 'Of Knowledge, Knower, and Known.' Cf. Ibn al-'Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-makkiyyah*, ed. M. 'Abd al-Raḥman alMar'ashlī, (Beirut, Lebanon: Dār Iḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, 1997), Vol. I, pp. 137–138.

6. *Futūḥāt*, Vol. I, p. 138.
7. Cf. Chittick's Introduction to his translation of *Iksīr al-'ārifin* in Mullā Ṣadrā, *The Elixir of the Gnostics*, (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 2003).
8. Afḍal al-Dīn Kāshānī, 'First Letter to Shams al-Dīn' translated in William Chittick, *The Heart of Islamic Philosophy: The Quest for Self-Knowledge in the Teachings of Afḍal al-Dīn Kāshānī* (Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 148.
9. Kāshānī, 'First Letter,' p. 270.
10. For the quotes, see Ibn Maymūn, *Dalālat al-ḥā'irīn*, ed. Aḥmad Farīd al-Mazīdī (Beirut, Lebanon: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 2007), pp. 102–103; for the English translation see *The Guide for the Perplexed*, tr. M. Friedlander (New York, 1956, 2nd edition), Part 1, sec. 68, pp. 100–102.
11. Philo of Alexandria, the Jewish theologian and philosopher of the 1st century AD, holds a similar view concerning God's mode of intellection. For Philo, 'inasmuch as God is absolute simplicity, His mind and His thinking and the objects of His thought are all one and identical with His essence.' Harry Austryn Wolfson, *Philo: Foundations of Religious Philosophy in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1948), Vol. I, p. 231.
12. Muḥy al-Dīn al-'Ajamī al-Iṣfahānī, *Êpitre sur l'unité et la trinité, traite sur l'intellect, fragment sur l'âme*, ed. and tr. M. Allard and G. Troupeau, (Beyrouth, Lebanon: Imperium Catholique, 1962), pp. 53–61.
13. The same reference by Ibn Sīnā to Alexander of Aphrodisias as the 'virtuous of the ancients' (*fāḍil al-mutaqaddimīn*) is repeated in *Ḥudūth*, p. 231.
14. The will at the end of the *Ishārāt*, to which Ṣadrā refers, exhorts those who are serious about gaining knowledge to examine philosophical matters with utmost care and diligence. See *al-Ishārāt wa'l-tanbīhāt*, with the commentaries of Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī and Quṭb al-Dīn al-Rāzī, (Tehran, Iran: Matba'at al-Ḥaydarī 1958), Vol. 3, pp. 419–421.
15. *Asfār*, I, 1, p. 300; I, 2, p. 46 ff.
16. *Asfār*, I, 1, p. 307. See also *Shawāhid*, p.158 where Ṣadrā, after enumerating several criticisms of Plato, defends him by saying that the 'majesty of Plato's power is greater than any doubts these rational considerations may cause about him.'
17. Cf. Ṣadrā's extensive discussion of the Platonic Forms in the *Shawāhid*, pp. 154–178.
18. Jean Pepin, 'Elements pour une histoire de la relation entre l'intelligence et l'intelligible chez Platon et dans le neoplatonisme,' *Revue Philosophique de la France et de l'etranger* 146 (1956), pp. 39–64.
19. Tr. B. Jowett. Cf. Badawī, *Aflāṭūn fī'l-islām* (Beirut, Lebanon: Dār al-Andalus, 1980, 2nd edition), p. 126.

20. Cf. A. J. Festugiére, *Contemplation et vie contemplative selon Platon* (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1975), pp. 105–117 and Kenneth Dorter, *Plato's Phaedo: An Interpretation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982), pp. 50–51.
21. Echoing the same theme, Ṣadrā says that 'the human soul has a world of its own and a dominion (*mamlakah*) similar to the domain of its creator, encapsulating the species of substances and accidents both detached and material.' *Qudsiyyah*, p. 219.
22. Cf. the Arabic version of the *Phaedo* in Badawī, *Aflāṭūn fī'l-islām*, p. 127.
23. In the *Phaedo*, 66d–67a, Plato says that '…if we would have pure knowledge of anything, we must be quit of the body—the soul in herself must behold things in themselves…. In this present life, I reckon that we make the nearest approach to knowledge when we have the least possible intercourse or communion with the body….'
24. Cf. *Timaeus*, 37 c. On the 'affinity' between the *nous* and the Forms, see David Bostock, *Plato's Phaedo* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1986), pp. 116–121. Consider also the following: 'And the soul is like the eye: when resting upon that on which truth and being shine, the soul perceives and understands and is radiant with intelligence; but when turned towards the twilight of becoming and perishing, then she has opinion only, and goes blinking about, and is first of one opinion and then of another, and seems to have no intelligence.' *The Republic*, VI, 508
25. Norman Gulley, *Plato's Theory of Knowledge* (London: Methuen & Co Ltd., 1962), pp. 23–34.
26. Francis M. Cornford, *Plato's Theory of Knowledge*, (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1957), pp. 4–5. Cf. also *Asfār*, I, 2, pp. 46–81 where Ṣadrā examines the Platonic Forms and their interpretation by al-Fārābī, Ibn Sīnā, Suhrawardī and others.
27. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 478 and IV, 1, pp. 303–310 where Ṣadrā quotes a number of arguments from the Greek philosophers, the Qur'ān, and *ḥadith* to prove the disembodiment of the soul (*tajarrud al-nafs*)—an assertion of crucial significance for the unification of the intellect and the intelligible.
28. Throughout this book, I use the Latin *intelligibilia* to translate *al-ma'qūlat* in the plural when Ṣadrā uses it as a single term. I also use the Latin *sensibilia* to translate the word *al-maḥsūsāt* in the plural. I believe both terms convey Ṣadrā's intended meaning better than their standard English translations.
29. For more on this, see Nicholas P. White, 'Plato's Metaphysical Epistemology' in *The Cambridge Companion to Plato*, ed. Richard Kraut (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 277–310.
30. This is the fundamental insight of Heidegger's critique of Cartesian subjectivism that has dominated, according to him, the modern Western

philosophy since Descartes. Cf. Charles B. Guignon, *Heidegger and the Problem of Knowledge* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1983). For the primacy of existence over knowing in Plato, see Léon Robin, *Les rapports de l'être et de la connaissance d'après Platon* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1957), especially, Chapter 3.

31. Cf. *Asfār*, I, 1, p. 440 where Ṣadrā restates the same Platonic position by saying that 'the substances of this lower world are the shadows of the substances of the higher world, by which they mean that the former are caused by the latter. Thus the caused is like a shadow vis-à-vis its cause.'
32. A. J. Festugière, *Contemplation*, p. 98.
33. A. J. Festugière, *Contemplation*, p. 89.
34. Pierre Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life: Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault*, tr. M. Chase, (Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 1995), p. 81.
35. See for instance *Asfār*, I, 2, pp. 48–51.
36. *Asfār*, II, 2, pp. 205–6.
37. Tr. Hippocrates G. Apostle, *Aristotle's On the Soul (De Anima)*, (Grinnell, Iowa: Peripatetic Press, 1981), pp. 49–50.
38. Consider Alexander of Aphrodisias' following remarks: '…so far as the intellect is concerned, it does not become matter with respect to its forms in order to receive them; its forms in fact are not bound up with material conditions as are the objects with which sensation deals. On the contrary, intellect separates its forms from any possible material circumstance and, thus apprehending them as they are in themselves, it beholds them in their complete isolation. For if the intellect apprehends white by a cognitive act, it does not cognize it as existing together with shape or magnitude. And the reason for this fact is that intellect makes no use of any bodily organ in its apprehension of its intelligible objects, since it is totally self-sufficient for the act of knowing the intelligible.' *De Anima*, 3.10, 84, tr. Athanasios P. Fotinis, *The De Anima of Alexander of Aphrodisias: A Translation and Commentary* (Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1979), p. 108.
39. Themistius, the most important commentator of Aristotle along with Alexander of Aphrodisias, reiterates this key point in his commentary on the *De Anima*: '[97,34 (430a 2–5, 6–9)] But how is [the potential intellect] at the same time both intellect and object of thought? And is it so in the same respect, or does it become intellect and object of thought in distinct respects? Now in the case of the [forms] that are without matter, what thinks and what is being thought are identical (for knowledge that involves contemplation is identical with what is known in that way) but in the case of the enmattered forms the object and the intellect are distinct. For, as we know, these (enmattered forms, I mean) are also not by nature objects of thought, but the intellect makes them such objects by severing them from matter, and they are [themselves]

potential, not actual, objects of thought.' Themistius, *On Aristotle's On the Soul*, tr. Robert B. Todd (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996), p. 122. For the Arabic version of Themistius' Commentary, see *An Arabic Translation of Themistius' Commentary on Aristotle's de Anima*, ed. M. C. Lyons (Columbia, S: University of South Carolina Press, 1973), p. 167.

40. Apostle, *Aristotle's On the Soul*, p. 51.
41. Ṣadrā reiterates the same point, among other places, in his commentary on the *Metaphysics* of Ibn Sīnā's *Shifā'*. Cf. *Sharḥ*, Vol. I, p. 613.
42. Aristotle, *De Anima*, 429b 25–30.
43. Cf. David Ross, *Aristotle* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995, 6th edition), pp. 153–156. Cf. *Asfār*, I, 3, pp. 317–318 where Ṣadrā quotes from the *Theology of Aristotle* to prove Aristotle's acceptance of the unification argument.
44. Themistius explains the analogy of light as follows: '[98,35 (430a 15–17)] As light when supervening on potential sight and potential colors produces both actual sight and actual colors, so too this actual intellect advances the potential intellect, and not only makes it an actual intellect, but also constitutes its potential objects of thought as actual objects. These are the enmattered forms, i.e., the universal thoughts assembled from particular objects of perception. [...] when the productive intellect encounters it [i.e., the potential intellect] and takes over this 'matter' of thoughts, the potential intellect becomes one with it, and becomes able to make transitions, and to combine and divide thoughts, and to observe thoughts from [the perspective of] one another.' Themistius, *On Aristotle's On the Soul*, p. 123; for the Arabic, see *An Arabic Translation of Themistius' Commentary*, p. 181.
45. Ṣadrā quotes the term from Alexander's *De Intellectu* as *al-'aql alladhī min khārij*. See *Asfār*, IV, p. 433.
46. This is how St. Thomas Aquinas explains the difference between the two philosophers in the *Summa Theologica*, I, Q, 79. Cf. also Majid Fakhry, *Averroes* (Oxford, UK: Oneworld, 2001), pp. 152–153.
47. Cf. Herbert A. Davidson, *AlFārābī, Avicenna, and Averroes on Intellect: Their Cosmologies, Theories of the Active Intellect, and Theories of Human Intellect* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 13–18.
48. See also the following statement by Aristotle: '...and thought thinks on itself because it shares the nature of the object of thought; for it becomes an object of thought in coming into contact with and thinking its object so that thought and object of thought are the same. For that which is capable of receiving the object of thought, i.e., essence, is thought.' *Metaphysics*, 1072b 19–23.
49. *Kitāb al-najāt*, ed. Majid Fakhry (Beirut, Lebanon: Dār al-Ufuq al-Jadīdah, 1985), pp. 207–209. The same view is stated in the *Shifā'*. Cf. *Avicenna's De*

Anima: Being the Psychological Part of Kitāb al-Shifā', ed. Fazlur Rahman (London: Oxford University Press, 1959), pp. 58–60.

50. See *Asfār*, I, 3, 427; II, 2, 221; III, 1, 97; IV, 2, 180.
51. See De Lacy O'Leary, *How Greek Science Passed to the Arabs* (London; 1949), pp. 21–29.
52. Cf. R. W. Sharples, 'Alexander of Aphrodisias: Scholasticism and Innovation' in *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt*, W. Haase and H. Temporini (eds.), (Berlin-New York: W. de Gruyter, 1987), Part II, 36.2, pp. 1177–1178.
53. H. B. Gottschalk provides a valuable discussion of Alexander's intellectual environment and his place among the Greek commentators of Aristotle in his 'Aristotelian Philosophy in the Roman World From the Time of Cicero to the End of the Second Century AD' in *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt*, Part II, 36.2 (1079–1174), especially pp. 1154–1164.
54. The attribution of the *De Intellectu* to Alexander of Aphrodisias is not without controversy. Schroeder, Todd and Moraux doubt its authorship by Alexander. See Frederic M. Schroeder and Robert B. Todd, *Two Greek Aristotelian Commentators on the Intellect, the De Intellectu Attributed to Alexander of Aphrodisias and Themistius' Paraphrase of Aristotle's De Anima 3.4-8* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1990), pp. 6–7.
55. Porphyry, *Vita Plotini,* (Napoli, Italy: G. Machiaroli, 1946), 14.13.
56. Schroeder and Todd, *Two Greek Aristotelian Commentators*, p. 5; F. E. Peters, *The Harvest of Hellenism* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1970), p. 375; Fazlur Rahman, *Avicenna's Psychology* (London: Oxford University Press, 1952), p. 5.
57. Cf. Phillip Merlan, *Monopsychism, Mysticism, Metaconsciousness* (The Hague, 1963), p. 122 and 'Greek Philosophy from Plato to Plotinus' in *The Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy*, ed. A. H. Armstrong (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1967), pp. 117–120.
58. Ibrahim Madkour, *La Place d'al-Fārābī dans l'école philosophique musulmane* (Paris: Librairie d'Amerique et d'Orient, 1934), p. 186.
59. Cf. *Peri Nous*/*De Intellectu* 106.19–110.7 in Schroeder and Todd, *Two Greek Aristotelian Commentators*, pp. 46–52. *Peri Nous* is also translated in Alexander of Aphrodisias, *Supplement to 'On the Soul,'* tr. R. W. Sharples (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004), pp. 24–44. For Alexander's role in the transition from Aristotelianism to neo-Platonism, see Blumenthal, *Aristotle and Neoplatonism in Late Antiquity* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996), pp. 7–19 and 151–170.
60. I borrow the term from Robert Wisnovsky, *Avicenna's Metaphysics in Context* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003), Introduction.
61. Cf. Sharples, 'Alexander of Aphrodisias,' pp. 1220–1223.

62. In this limited sense, Duhem is right in citing Alexander, Themistius, John Philoponus and Simplicius among the 'sources of the Neoplatonic philosophy of the Arabs.' Cf. Pierre Duhem, *Le système du monde: Histoire des doctrines cosmologique de Platon à Copernic* (Paris: Librairie Scientifique Hermann, 1954), IV, pp. 405–422.
63. A good example of this is how parts of Proclus' *Elements of Theology* made their way into the Arabic works of Alexander. See Fritz Zimmermann, 'Proclus Arabus Rides Again,' *Arabic Science and Philosophy*, Vol. 4 (1994), pp. 9–51. For Zimmerman's equally important thesis that the 'circle of al-Kindī' treated Plotinus and Proclus, the two great champions of Neoplatonism, as commentators of Aristotle and Alexander, see his 'The Origins of the So-Called *Theology of Aristotle*' in J. Kraye, W. F. Ryan and C. B. Schmitt (eds.) *Pseudo-Aristotle in the Middle Ages: The Theology and Other Texts* (London: The Warburg Institute, 1986), pp. 110–240. On *Proclus Arabus* and his role in the consolidation of Islamic Neoplatonism, see Gerhard Endress, *Proclus Arabus: Zwanzig Abschnitte aus der Institutio Theologica in arabischer Übersetzungen* (Beirut and Wiesbaden: Orient-Institut der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft 1973).
64. Cf. Richard Walzer, 'Aristotle's Active Intellect in Greek and Early Islamic Philosophy' in *Plotino e il Neoplatonismo in Oriente e in Occidente* (Rome, Italy: Accademia Nazionale Dei Lincei, 1974), p. 431.
65. H. J. Blumenthal, *Aristotle and Neoplatonism*, p. 15.
66. This is how al-Fārābī refers to him in the *Mabādī' ārā' ahl al-madīnat al-fāḍilah*, ed. and tr. Richard Walzer as *On the Perfect State* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 54.
67. Ibn Abī Uṣaybi'ah, '*Uyūn al-anbā' fī ṭabaqāt al-aṭibbā'*, ed. M. Basil 'Uyūn al-Sūd (Beirut, Lebanon: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1998), pp. 93–4. For more on this, see Fehmi Jadaane *L'Influence du stoïcisme sur la pensée musulamane* (Beyrouth, Lebanon: Dar el-Machreq Editeurs, 1968), pp. 48–50. The Stoic challenge of the 2nd and 3rd centuries AD is evident from the fact that Alexander did not write a commentary on the *Nicomachean Ethics* but authored his own *Ethical Problems* as well as a treatise on destiny. Cf. Arthur Madigan, 'Alexander of Aphrodisias: The Book of Ethical Problems' in *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt*, Part II, 36.2, pp. 1260–1279; and Gottschalk, 'Aristotelian Philosophy in the Roman World', pp. 1161–1162.
68. 'After Aristotle there was a group who followed his path and commented upon his books. Among the brightest were Themistius, Alexander of Aphrodisias, and Porphyry. These three are the most learned in the books of Aristotle and the most established in [the understanding of] the books of philosophy.' Sa'īd al-Andalusī, *Ṭabaqāt al-umam* ed. Ḥusayn Mu'nas (Cairo, Egypt: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1998), p. 39. Cf. Ṣadrā's reference to Themistius on the temporal origination of the world in *Ḥudūth*, p. 201.

69. Moritz Steinschneider, *Die Arabischen Űbersetzungen aus dem Griechischen* (Austria: Akademische Drück—U. Verlagsanstalt, 1960), p. 96; F. E. Peters, *Aristoteles Arabus: The Oriental Translations and Commentaries on the Aristotelian Corpus* (Leiden, Holland: E. J. Brill, 1968), pp. 58–61; A. Badawī, *La Transmission de la philosophique grecque au monde arabe* (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1987), p. 112. For the Arabic text of the *Peri Nous/De Intellectu* see A. Badawī, *Shurūḥ ʻalā arisṭū mafqūdah fī'l-yūnāniyyah wa rasā'il ukhrā* (Beirut, Lebanon: Dār al-Mashriq, 1971), pp. 31–42; for the Greek text, see pp. 273–280. See also J. Finnegan, 'Texte arabe du PERI NOU d'Alexandre d'Aphrodise' in *Mélanges Louis Massignon* (Damas, 1957), pp. 133–152. Cf. the Greek original in *Alexandri Aphrodisiensis praeter Commentaria, Scripta Minora*, I, ed. Ivo Bruns (Berolini, Lebanon: G. Reimer, 1997–1892), pp. 106–113.
70. For Alexander's short treatises in Arabic translation see Badawī, *Shurūḥ ʻalā arisṭū*, pp. 19–82 and *Arisṭū ʻind al-ʻarab* (Cairo, Egypt: Maktabat al-Nahḍat al-Miṣriyyah, 1947), pp. 253–308. Alexander's three treatises (1) '*fī al-ṣūrah wa annahā tamām al-ḥarakah wa kamāluha ʻalā ra'y arisṭū*', (2) '*fī anna al-fiʻla aʻammu min al-ḥarakah ʻalā ra'y arisṭū*', and (3) '*fī ibṭāl qawl man qāla annahu lā yakūnu shay' illā min shay' wa ithbāt anna kulla shay' innamā yakūnu lā min shay*'' have been thoroughly reviewed in Ahmad Hasnawi, 'Alexandre d'Aphrodise vs Jean Philopon: Notes sur Quelques Traités d'Alexandre 'Perdus' en Grec, Conservé en Arabe,' *Arabic Science and Philosophy*, Vol. 4 (1994), pp. 53–109.
71. Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʻa, '*Uyūn al-anbā*,' p. 93.
72. G. Théry, *Autour de décret de 1210. II: Alexandre d'Aphrodise: Aperçu sur l'influence de sa noétique* (Le Saulchoir Kain, 1926), pp. 34–36; E. Gilson, 'Les sources gréco-arabes de l'augustinisme avicennisant' *Archives d'Histoire Doctrinale et Littéraire du Moyen Âge* IV (1929), pp. 22–26; and Duhem, *Le système du monde*, IV, p. 405. A. M. Goichon describes al-Kindī's *Risalah fi'l-ʻaql* as simply 'inspired by Alexander of Aphrodisias' in her *La Philosophie d'Avicenne et son influence en europe médiévale* (Paris: Librairie d'Amerique et d'Orient, 1951), p. 11.
73. Fazlur Rahman is of this opinion; *Avicenna's Psychology*, pp. 90–93.
74. For those who oppose the previous assumption, see M. Abū Rīda, *Rasā'il al-Kindī al-falsafiyyah* (Cairo, Egypt: Dār al-Fikr al-ʻArabī, 1978), Vol. I, p. 313; Jean Jolivet, *L'Intellect selon Kindī* (Leiden, Holland: E. J. Brill, 1971), p. 32; George Atiyeh, *al-Kindī: The Philosopher of the Arabs* (Islamabad, Pakistan: Islamic Research Institute, 1967), p. 118. Jolivet's work (pp. 31–46) contains a well-informed discussion of the controversy.
75. In his 'Notes' on Aristotle's De Anima entitled *al-Taʻlīqāt ʻalā ḥawāshī kitāb al-nafs li-arisṭūṭālis*, Ibn Sīnā, in criticizing the defenders of the unification argument, refers to a group of people who 'make the active

intellect the first deity (*al-ilāh al-awwal*).' Ibn Sīnā does not mention any names in the passage. This is probably a reference to some 'Alexandrist' philosophers or perhaps more accurately to the 'Porphyrians' whom Ibn Sīnā criticizes severely. For the passage, see *Ta'līqāt* in Badawī, *Arisṭū 'ind al-'arab*, p. 92.

76. *Risālah fī'l-'aql*, in Jean Jolivet, *L'Intellect selon Kindī*, p. 158. But the Arabic translation of the *Peri Nous* says that *li-anna'l-'aql bi'l-fi'l huwa abadan ma'qūl*. Cf. Badawi, *Shurūḥ 'alā arisṭū*, p. 34.
77. For Alexander's place in al-Kindī's cosmology, see Silvia Fazzo and Hillary Wiesner, 'Alexander of Aphrodisias in the Kindī-Circle and in al-Kindī's Cosmology.' *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy*, Vol. 3 (1993), pp. 119–153.
78. Gutas draws attention to the fact that the references to specific Greek philosophers in Ibn Sīnā's later philosophical works decrease sharply, which points to Ibn Sīnā's desire to dissociate himself from the Greco-Alexandrian commentators of the First Teacher. Cf. Gutas, *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition: Introduction to Reading Avicenna's Philosophical Works* (Leiden, Holland: E. J. Brill, 1988), pp. 290–292.
79. *Najāt*, p. 61. According to Gutas, Ibn Sīnā uses the word *muḥaṣṣil* 'to describe the most accomplished philosophers in the Aristotelian tradition, and in particular Alexander of Aphrodisias.' *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition*, p. 189.
80. Cf. L. E. Goodman, *Avicenna* (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 134–138.
81. *Mafātiḥ*, Vol. II, p. 638: 'As for the souls that have not reached actuality after potentiality, the philosophers have disagreed about its subsistence and perishing. Some among them like Alexander of Aphrodisias have held that they perish with the perishing of the body.'
82. *Ḥudūth*, p. 193.
83. Averroes, *De Anima*, I. III, comm. 15, 159, d–e, p. 158 in Alain de Libera, *L'intelligence et la pensee: grand commentaire du De Anima: Livre III* (429a 10–435b 25) (Paris: Flammarion, 1998). Yet, Alexander is not totally absent from Ibn Rushd's theory of the intellect, which, as G. Théry points out in *Autour du decrèt de 1210*, p. 41, is geared in many ways toward establishing a harmony between Alexander and Themistius. Cf. *Talkhīs kitāb al-nafs* ('Averroes' Middle Commentary on Aristotle's *de Anima*') ed. Alfred L. Ivry, rev. Muhsin Mahdi (Cairo, Egypt: Majlis al-'Alā' li'l-Thaqāfah, 1994), pp. 123, 125, 128. See also Arthur Hyman, 'Aristotle's Theory of the Intellect and its Interpretation by Averroes' in *Studies in Aristotle*, Dominic J. O'Meara (ed.), (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press 1981), pp. 161–191.
84. Madkour draws attention to this point and links al-Fārābī's concept of conjunction (*ittiṣāl*) with the active intellect to the tradition of Islamic mysticism represented by Junayd al-Baghdādī and Manṣūr al-Ḥallāj on

the one hand, and to the School of Illumination, on the other. See his *La Place d'al-Fārābī*, pp. 196–209.

85. Cf. Dominique Urvoy, *Ibn Rushd (Averroes)* (London and New York: Routledge, 1991), p. 43; also pp. 95–96. It would make for a fascinating study to investigate the precise relationship between Ibn Rushd, Alexander and the other philosophers Ibn Rushd accuses as 'followers of Alexander.'
86. Merlan, *Monopsychism,* p. 20.
87. Cf. Merlan, *Monopsychism*, p. 20. See also his *From Platonism to Neoplatonism* (The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1953), pp. 54–55.
88. Quoted in Schroeder and Todd, *Two Greek Aristotelian Commentators*, p. 14. Cf. Fotinis, *The De Anima*, p. 117. Cf. the Arabic translation of the *Peri Nous* in Badawī, *Shurūḥ 'alā arisṭū*, p. 32.
89. Cf. also L. E. Goodman, *Avicenna* (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 135–136.
90. This reading of Alexander depends largely on that of Merlan, 'Greek Philosophy from Plato to Plotinus,' p. 117. See also Jean Jolivet, 'Étapes dans l'histoire de l'intellect agent' in *Perspectives arabes et médiévales sur la tradition scientifique et philosophique grecque*, ed. A. Hasnawi, A. Elamrani-Jamal and M. Aouad (Paris: Peeters, 1997), pp. 572–575.
91. Ibn Sīnā, for instance, criticizes Alexander on this point. See his *Risālah fī ithbāt al-nubuwwah*, ed. M. Marmura (Beirut, Lebanon: Dār al-Nahār li'n-nashr, 1991, 2.nd edition), p. 52, par. 30. For Ṣadrā's reaction, see *Asfār*, IV, 1, p. 399.
92. Cf. Francois Nuyens, *L'évolution de la psychologie d'Aristote* (Louvain, Belgium: Editions De L'Institut Superieur de Philosophie, 1948), p. 310.
93. Merlan, 'Greek Philosophy,' p. 65.
94. Alexander, *De Anima*, 3.19, 86, p. 113.
95. Ibid. 3.19, p. 115. Cf. the Arabic translation in Badawī, *Shurūḥ 'alā arisṭū,* p. 35. Alexander further states that 'intellect which is [always] in act became one with the pure intelligible from the very first moment that it began to know it, in virtue of the principle that in every cognitive act, the intellect, in its act of knowing, takes on a likeness to the thing known and consequently becomes itself of the same sort as the thing known.' *De Anima*, 3.29, 90, p. 119.
96. *De Anima*, 3. 19, p. 118.
97. *Peri Nous*, 108.7; Schroeder and Todd, *Two Greek Aristotelian Commentators*, p. 49.
98. *Peri Nous*, 113.18; Schroeder and Todd, *Two Greek Aristotelian Commentators*, p. 58; Badawī, *Shurūḥ 'alā arisṭū*, p. 42.
99. Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I, Q, 79; also *De Unitate Intellectus Contra Averroistas*, tr. B. H. Zedler, *On the Unity of the Intellect Against the Averroists* (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 1968), Chapter I. Cf. also Franz Brentano's old yet still valuable survey

in 'Nous Poietikos: Survey of Earlier Interpretations', translated from Brentano's *Die Psychologie des Aristoteles* (1867) in *Essays on Aristotle's De Anima*, ed. Martha C. Nussbaum and Amelie O. Rorty (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1992), pp. 313–341.

100. Franz Rosenthal, 'As-ŝayĥ al-yūnānī and the Arabic Plotinus Source' *Orientalia* 21, (1952,), pp. 461–492; 22 (1953), pp. 370–400 and 24 (1955), pp. 42–66; Badawī, *La Transmission*, p. 46; Badawī, *Aflūṭīn 'ind al-'arab*, (Cairo, Egypt: Dar al-Nahḍat al-'Arabiyyah, 1966), pp. 1–2. In the *Ḥudūth*, p. 228, Ṣadrā quotes from Shahrastānī's *Milal* where the expression *al-shaykh al-yūnānī* appears between the names of Aristotle and Diogenes.
101. Franz Rosenthal, 'Plotinus in Islam: The Power of Anonymity' in *Plotino e il Neoplatonismo in Oriente e in Occidente* (Rome: 1974), pp. 437–446.
102. I borrow the term from Pierre Hadot. What he has to say about the place of 'creative mistakes' in Hellenistic and Scholastic philosophy holds true for similar cases in Islamic philosophy. Cf. His 'Philosophy, Exegesis, and Creative Mistakes' in *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, pp. 71–77.
103. For purposes of style, see the reference to al-Ḥimṣī in al-Ṣafadī's *al-Ghayth al-mujassam* where al-Ṣafadī describes al-Ḥimṣī along with Yuḥannā ibn al-Biṭrīq as belonging to the school of literalist translators, for which he criticizes them. The other school, which he praises, is that of Ḥunayn ibn Ishāq where the translator 'considers a whole sentence, ascertains its full meaning and then expresses it in Arabic with a sentence identical in meaning, without concern for the correspondence individual words.' Quoted in Franz Rosenthal, *The Classical Heritage in Islam* (London and New York: Routledge, 1975), p. 17. The reference to al-Ḥimṣī as a literalist translator is interesting in view of the fact that al-Ḥimṣī's work on the *Uthūlūjyā* is a fine example of adaptation rather than straightforward translation.
104. Cf. Peter Adamson, *The Arabic Plotinus: A Philosophical Study of the Theology of Aristotle* (London: Duckworth, 2002), pp. 17–21.
105. Ṣadrā takes note of al-Kindī's role in the refinement of the Arabic translation of the *Enneads*. See *Asfār*, I, 2, p. 68. The full text of the *Uthūlūjyā* has been edited and published by Badawī in his *Aflūṭīn 'ind al-'arab*. The English translation is in *Plotini Opera* II, ed. P. Henry and H.-R. Schwyzer (Paris and Brussels: Desclée de Brouwer, 1959). For the history of the *Uthūlūjyā*, see Badawī, *Aflūṭīn 'ind al-'arab*, pp. 1–66; F. W. Zimmermann, 'The Origins of the So-Called *Theology of Aristotle*,' pp. 110–240; and M. Aouad, 'La 'Théologie d'Aristote' et autres texts du Plotinus Arabus' in *Dictionnarie des philosophes antiques* (Paris: Editions du CNRS, 1989), pp. 541–590.
106. *Kalām fī khayr al-maḥḍ*, a work by Proclus, is as important as the *Uthūlūjyā* for the Neoplatonic interpretation of Aristotle in the Islamic

and Medieval Latin worlds. The work is also known under the name *Kitāb al-īḍāḥ fī'l-khayr al-maḥḍ*. It is not clear why and how the Latin title *Liber de Causis* was adopted. The full text of the *Kalām fī khayr al-maḥḍ* has been edited and published in Badawī, *Aflāṭūniyyat al-muḥdatha 'ind al-'arab* (Cairo, Egypt: Maktabat al-Naḥdat al-Miṣriyyah, 1955), pp. 1–33. For an evaluation of *al-Khayr al-maḥḍ* and its place in Islamic philosophy, see Richard C. Taylor, 'The *Kalām fī Maḥḍ al-Khair (Liber de Causis)* in the Islamic Philosophical Milieu' in *Pseudo-Aristotle in the Middle Ages*, pp. 37–52. See also Badawī, *La Transmission*, pp. 60–72.

107. Cf. Badawī, *La Transmission*, pp. 47–59.
108. Cf. *Asfār*, I, 3, 156–158; II, 2, 196–272; III, 1, 310–312. Ṣadrā has also devoted several treatises to the temporal origination of the world. See, for instance, *Ḥudūth*, especially Chapters 9 and 11.
109. Cf. Ṣadrā's remarks on this, *Asfār*, I, 3, pp. 112–113.
110. Ibn Sīnā concurs: '…corporeal bodies are the primary particulars of the world through which this [universal] whole (*al-kull*), which is one, is put in order, and the primary particulars of the world are without doubt the simples (*basā'iṭ*)'. *Shifā'*, *Ṭabī'iyyāt*, ed. I. Madkour and M. Qasim (Cairo, Egypt: Dār al-Kutub al-'Arabī, 1960), p. 77.
111. Extract number 3 in Badawī, *Aflūṭīn 'ind al-'arab*, p. 185, repeats the same argument.
112. As Ṣadrā notes, what is meant by *huwiyyah* here is existence (*al-wujūd*). Cf. *Asfār*, III, 2, p. 273. This reading is in keeping with the Greek original where the expression *to on* is used. Obviously, this is a reference to Plotinus' central concern to define the One as the 'beyond-being.'
113. Cf. Dominic J. O'Meara, *Plotinus* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 50.
114. *Enneads*, V. 3. 10. Tr. Armstrong, p. 105.
115. *Enneads*, V. 3. 11, p. 109.
116. Cf. *Enneads*, V. 3. 14 and VI. 9. 3 where the idea of the ineffability of the One is developed.
117. Cf. A. H. Armstrong, 'Plotinus' in *The Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy*, ed. A. H. Armstrong (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1967), p. 237. See also Kenny, *Mystical Monotheism*, pp. 100–102.
118. Armstrong, 'Plotinus,' p. 238.
119. Adamson, *The Arabic Plotinus*, pp. 112–115.
120. This is a reference to Zeno's definition of God as 'warmed breath.' Cf. Pierre Hadot, *Plotinus or the Simplicity of Vision*, tr. M. Chase (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), p. 37, n. 5.
121. The etymological continuity between 'life' (*ḥayāt*) and 'animal' (*ḥayawān*) is lost in English.
122. The same passage is also quoted in the *Shawāhid*, pp. 175–178.

123. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 341.
124. *Enneads*, V, 9, 5, tr. J. P. Kenny, *Mystical Monotheism*, p. 113.
125. For more on Plotinus' controversial idea in the *Enneads*, V. 5 that 'intellectual beings are not outside the Intellectual-Principle' (*hoti ouch exo tou nou ta noeta*) and an evaluation of the charges of solipsism against Plato and Plotinus, see A. H. Armstrong, 'The Background of the Doctrine that the Intelligibles are not Outside the Intellect' in *Les Sources de Plotin* (Vandoeuvres-Geneve, 1957), pp. 393–413; Kenny, *Mystical Monotheism*, pp. 93–96.
126. *Enneads*, V. 5. 1; tr. Armstrong, p. 159.
127. Cf. also *Enneads*, V. 9. 5.
128. *Asfār*, I, 2, p. 68.
129. *Enneads*, V.9.5; tr. Armstrong, p. 299.
130. Cf. *Asfār*, I, 3, pp. 280, 284, 297, 451, 465.
131. Cf. *Enneads*, V. 3.5 and O'Meara, *Plotinus*, pp. 40–41.
132. Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī makes a note of the same point in *al-Mabāḥith al-mashriqiyah* (Beirut, Lebanon: Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabī, 1990), Vol. I, p. 448.
133. *Asfār*, I, 1, p. 114; the same quote appears in *Asfār*, I, 3, 395.
134. Cf. the English translation by Atiyeh in *al-Kindī*, p. 213.
135. Jean Jolivet, *L'Intellect*, pp. 18–19.
136. Merlan, *Monopsychism,* p. 1.
137. Cf. the English translation by Atiyeh in *al-Kindī*, p. 214.
138. One should mention also *al-Siyāsat al-madaniyyah*, which is also known as *Mabādi' al-mawjūdāt*. Cf. *Kitāb al-siyāsat al-madaniyyah*, ed. Fawzī Najjār (Beirut, Lebanon: al-Matba'ah al-Kātūlikiyyah, 1964). Al-Fārābī's epistemology in general is outlined in his other works including *Iḥsā' al-'ulūm* and *Kitāb al-ḥurūf*. Cf. Ian Richard Netton, *Al-Fārābī and His School* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), pp. 36–37.
139. *Falsafat Arisṭūṭālis*, ed. Muhsin Mahdi (Beirut, Lebanon: 1961), p. 128. Cf. Miriam Galston, *Politics and Excellence: The Political Philosophy of Al Fārābī* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990), pp. 82–83.
140. al-Fārābī, *al-Siyāsat al-madaniyyah*, p. 79.
141. Cf. Davidson, *AlFārābī, Avicenna, and Averroes on Intellect*, p. 55.
142. *al-Madīnah*, p. 52.
143. al-Fārābī's emanationism has been a subject of debate in modern scholarship. Muhsin Mahdi argues that emanationism appears only in al-Fārābī's 'popular' works such as the *Political Regime* and therefore is not a main tenet of his philosophy. Cf. Muhsin Mahdi, *AlFārābī's Philosophy of Plato and Aristotle* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell Paperbacks, 1962), pp. 3–4. See also Miriam Galston, 'A Re-examination of al-Fārābī's Neoplatonism,' *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 15 (1977), pp. 13–32 and Therese-Anne Druart, 'al-Fārābī and Emanationism' in *Studies in Medieval Philosophy*, ed. John F. Wippel (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1987), pp. 23–43 where she

proposes a tripartite division of al-Fārābī's works as 'Aristotelian,' 'Programmatic', and 'Emanationist'. That emanationism has been a controversial issue even among the Muslim Peripatetics is evinced by the fact that Ibn Rushd criticizes al-Fārābī for adopting emanationism as an Aristotelian idea. Cf. *Averroes' Tahāfut al-tahāfut (The Incoherence of the Incoherence)*, tr. Simon Van Den Bergh (London: Luzac and Co., 1969), p. 87 ff. See also Barry S. Kogan, 'Averroes and the Theory of Emanation,' *Medieval Studies* 43 (1981), pp. 384–404.

144. I adopt the term 'necessitarianism' from Norman Kretzmann, 'A General Problem of Creation: Why Would God Create Anything at All?' in Scott MacDonald (ed.), *Being and Goodness: The Concept of the Good in Metaphysics and Philosophical Theology* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1991), pp. 208–228. Creation of the universe by a necessity of the Divine Nature has been criticized by later theologians and philosophers on the grounds that this model overlooks the Divine Will. Such theologians as Ghazālī and Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī on the one hand, and Mullā Ṣadrā on the other, have raised a number of objections against the emanationist model. Cf. *Asfār*, III, 2, p. 111. I have dealt with this problem in relation to Ṣadrā's defense of the 'best of all possible worlds' (*aḥsan al-niẓām*) argument in my 'Mullā Ṣadrā on Theodicy and the Best of All Possible Worlds,' *Oxford Journal of Islamic Studies*, 18:2 (2007), pp. 183–201.
145. *al-Madīnah*, pp. 90–91.
146. *al-Madīnah*, pp. 100–104. A more elaborate analysis of the scale of emanation is to be found in Ibn Sīnā, *Ishārāt*, Vol. 3, pp. 242–260.
147. *al-Madīnah*, p. 54.
148. Cf. Fazlur Rahman, *Prophecy in Islam: Philosophy and Orthodoxy* (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd.), pp. 12–14.
149. al-Fārābī, *Risālah fī'l-'aql*, ed. Maurice Bouyges (Beyrouth, Lebanon: Dar el-Machreq, 1983), pp. 20–24.
150. *al-Madīnah*, p. 244. Walzer's translation of *'ala'l-wajh* as 'as it were,' which is also adopted by Davidson, would do well too. Cf. *al-Madīnah*, p. 245 and Davidson, *AlFārābī, Avicenna, and Averroes on Intellect*, p. 54.
151. *al-Madīnah*, pp. 52–53.
152. At least this is what al-Fārābī has been accused of on the basis of a report by Ibn Bājjah who claims to have drawn his conclusion from al-Fārābī's lost commentary on the *Nichomachean Ethics*. Interestingly enough, this is one of the few points for which Ṣadrā criticizes al-Fārābī. Cf. *Asfār*, IV, 2, pp. 150–151. Ṣadrā criticizes Alexander 'the Roman' (*al-rūmī*) on this point in *Ḥudūth*, p. 193. On al-Fārābī and the immortality of the personal soul, see Majid Fakhry, *al-Fārābī: Founder of Islamic Neoplatonism* (Oxford, UK: Oneworld, 2002), p. 119; Oliver Leaman, *An Introduction to Classical Islamic Philosophy* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge

University Press, 1985), pp. 111–112; and Davidson, *AlFārābī, Avicenna, and Averroes, on Intellect*, pp. 70–73.

153. Kenny, *Mystical Monotheism*, p. 4.
154. al-Fārābī, *Jawābāt li-masā'il su'ila 'anhā* in *Risālatān falsafiyyatān* ed. Ja'far Āl-i Yāsīn (Beirut, Lebanon: Dār al-Manāḥil, 1987), p. 104.
155. In his *'Uyūn al-masā'il*, al-Fārābī adds the adjective 'pure' (*maḥḍ*): '[The Necessary Being] is pure goodness; it is pure intellect, pure intelligible, and pure intellector; and all these three things are one and the same in it.' '*Uyūn al-masā'il* in *al-Majmū*,' ed. Aḥmad Nājī al-Jamālī and M. Amīn al-Khānjī (Cairo, Egypt: Matba'at al-Sa'ādah, 1907), p. 67.
156. *Risālah fī'l-'aql*, p. 4. A shorter discussion of the multiple meanings of the word intellect appears in Ibn Sīnā's *Kitāb al-ḥudūd*. See the English translation in Kiki Kennedy-Day, *Books of Definition in Islamic Philosophy* (London and New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), pp. 102–104.
157. *Risālah fī'l-'aql*, p. 7.
158. *Risālah fī'l-'aql*, pp. 8–9.
159. *Risālah fī'l-'aql*, pp. 9–12.
160. *Asfār*, III, pp. 421–427.
161. This is how al-Fārābī's philosopher-ruler claims supremacy over others and establishes order in the political body: 'This is the Sovereign (*al-ra'īs*) over whom no other man rules in any way. He is the Imām. He is the first sovereign of the virtuous city, the sovereign of the virtuous *ummah*, and the sovereign of the entire inhabited world,' *al-Madīnah*, p. 246. Cf. Muhsin Mahdi, *AlFārābī and the Foundations of Islamic Political Philosophy*, p. 132.
162. Cf. Davidson, *AlFārābī, Avicenna and Averroes on Intellect*, pp. 52–55.
163. St. Thomas Aquinas reiterates this very point when he says that 'what acts is nobler than what is acted on, an active principle is nobler than its material' and 'intelligibility depends upon actuality.' See his commentary on the *De Anima* in *Aristotle's De Anima in the Version of William of Moerbeke and the Commentary of St. Thomas Aquinas*, tr. K. Foster and S. Humphries (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1954), paragraph 725, pp. 424 and 733, p. 428.
164. *Averroès: L'intelligence et la pensée*, tr. Alain de Libera (Paris: GF Flammarion, 1998), p. 97. The original of Ibn Rushd's commentary on Aristotle's *De Anima* is lost in Arabic and exists only in Latin. The French translation by Libera is based on the extant Latin version of Ibn Rushd's commentary on the *De Anima*, Book III (429 a10–435 b25).
165. Cf. Kindī, *Fī'l-'aql*, p. 2, in Jolivet, *L'Intellect*, p. 159.
166. *Fī'l-'aql*, pp. 35–36. Cf. also *'Uyūn al-masā'il* in *al-Majmū*,' p. 67.
167. Cf. *Asfār*, III, 1, p. 180.
168. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 427.

169. This is where Ṣadrā invokes al-Fārābī in support of the view that multiplicity of names does not mean multiplicity of essence. Cf. *Asfār*, III, 1, p. 121.
170. Cf. Ṣadrā's quote from al-Fārābī to this effect; *Asfār*, III, 1, p. 217.
171. J. Finnegan, 'Avicenna's Refutation of Porphyrius' *Avicenna Commemoration Volume*, (Calcutta, 1956), p. 197.
172. The word *mutaṣaddirīn* appears in some manuscripts as *mutaqaddimīn*, i.e., the ancients. In his quote from the *Shifā'*, Ṣadrā uses the latter; Cf. *Ittiḥād* in *Majmū'ah*, p. 80. Finnegan reads it simply as 'Porphyrians'; 'Avicenna's Refutation of Porphyrius,' p. 187.
173. In his gloss over this paragraph, Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī notes that it was the general view of the Peripatetic School to establish a unity between intellect and its objects of intellection. *Ishārāt,* Vol. III, p. 293.
174. Ibn Sīnā, *Najāt*, pp. 186–187. Cf. also *Kitāb al-ḥudūd* in Kennedy, *Books of Definition*, p. 112.
175. Ibn Sīnā, *Shifā'*, *Ṭabī'iyyāt*, pp. 81–82.
176. *Ṭabī'iyyāt*, p. 129. Cf. Goichon, *Lexique de la langue philosophique d'Ibn Sīnā (Avicenne)* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1938), pp. 99–100.
177. The second book of the *Ṭabī'iyyāt* of the *Shifā'* (pp. 77–198) is devoted to generation and corruption where Ibn Sīnā provides an extensive analysis of the various views and theories about qualitative and quantitative change, which has notoriously created problems for the Peripatetics ever since Aristotle. Ibn Sīnā's frustration with the whole issue is clear from the following: 'We cannot say anything comprehensive about the attribution of these matters to one another. This is a disputed issue without precision. Whoever wishes to encapsulate the whole matter would run into difficulty. What we have heard about it has not convinced us and we have not understood the matter fully. Let us hope someone other than us understands it as it [should be understood].' *Ṭabī'iyyāt*, p. 195.
178. *Avicenna's De Anima*, pp. 239–240.
179. Cf. Rahman, *Prophecy in Islam*, pp. 16–17.
180. Ibn Sīnā, *Kitāb al-ḥudūd*, p. 99, quoted in Goichon, *Lexique*, p. 428.
181. Goichon, *Lexique*, p. 429.
182. Cf. Walzer, 'Aristotle's Active Intellect,' p. 433.
183. In Ṣadrā's quote of this passage, the verb 'hawwasa' (Avicenna's *De Anima*, p. 240) is replaced by the verb 'bayyana.' Cf. *Ittiḥād* in *Majmū'ah*, p. 21.
184. This is in sharp contrast to what Ṣadrā has to say about Porphyry: 'This meaning—that is, the unification of the intellector and the intelligible—was unveiled to the foremost of the Peripatetics, Porphyry, who was the most excellent student of the most ancient teacher and the greatest philosopher, Aristotle.' *Iksīr al-'ārifīn*, 4.1.9, p. 58. For a similar description of Porphyry, see *Ḥudūth*, pp. 232–233. It is interesting to note

that Ibn Sīnā uses the word 'Sufi' in relation to Porphyry, thus intimating a relationship between the Greek Porphyrians and the Sufis.

185. Cf. Fazlur Rahman, *Prophecy in Islam*, p. 16.
186. This is a reference to Ṣadrā's theory of substantial motion (*al-ḥarakat al-jawhariyyah*) according to which change takes place in all categories including substance.
187. *al-Mubāḥathāt*, par. 777 and 778, p. 268.
188. Goichon, *Lexique*, pp. 434–435.
189. In addition, Ṣadrā mentions one more problem. According to him, if '…the active intellect or any of the separate substances become a form for the soul with their own actual existence,' then, since the actual existence of the active intellect can unite with only one existence at a time, all other souls would be deprived of it and become ignorant all at once. Cf. *Sharḥ*, Vol. I, p. 606. For Ṣadrā's summary of the two points mentioned above, see *Asfār*, I, 3, pp. 335–336.
190. Ibn Sīnā brings up the same argument in *al-Ta'līqāt*, p. 93.
191. *Ishārāt*, Vol. 3, p. 295.
192. This is where the unification argument brings us to the shores of monopsychism which, as attributed to Ibn Rushd and his Latin followers, claims that there is only one soul for humanity. This view has caused such a long controversy in Latin scholasticism that St. Thomas Aquinas must have felt obliged to write a separate treatise to refute it. One interesting incident illustrates the precarious nature of the matter: a certain soldier in Paris, who had heard the argument of the Averroists and was unwilling to atone for his sins, has said that 'if the soul of the blessed Peter is saved, I shall also be saved; for if we know by one intellect, we shall share the same destiny.' Quoted from William of Tocco, an early biographer of Thomas Aquinas, in Saint Thomas Aquinas, *On the Unity of the Intellect Against the Averroists* (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 1968), Preface.
193. In the *Mubāḥathāt*, par. 713, p. 242, Ibn Sīnā mentions another criticism of the defenders of the unification argument without elaborating on it. In response to the claim that the Necessary Being does not know other things through its own essence, Ibn Sīnā says that he does not know any such theory by the Mu'tazilites or the Greeks but attributes it to some later philosophers. In his view, this 'new' theory which precludes God from knowing things through His Essence comes close to the unification argument.
194. *Avicenna's De Anima*, p. 235.
195. Cf. *Avicenna's De Anima*, p. 48.
196. *Avicenna's De Anima*, p. 50.
197. Ibn Sīnā, *al-Mabda' wa'l-ma'ād*, ed. 'Abd Allāh Nūrānī (Tehran, Iran: Dānishgāh-i Tehrān, AH 1363), p. 6. Ibn Sīnā's student Bahmanyār concurs with his teacher. See his *Kitāb al-taḥṣīl* ed. M. Murtaḍā

Muṭahhari (Tehran: The University of Tehran Press, 1375 (AH), 2nd edition), pp. 573–574.

198. Cf. *al-Mubāḥathāt*, par. 427, p. 106; *Ibn Sīnā's De Anima*, p. 241.
199. For a partial English translation of the *'Arshiyyah*, see A. J. Arberry, *Avicenna on Theology* (Westport, CT: Hyperion Press, INC., 1994, Reprint edition), pp. 33–34. The *Najāt* pp. 280–281 contains a section almost identical to the *'Arshiyyah* quoted above. See also *Ishārāt*, Vol. 2, p. 292 where the question of self-knowledge is taken up again.
200. Cf. Ṣadrā, *Iksīr al-'ārifīn*, 4.1.10 in the Chittick edition, p. 58.
201. Suhrawardī, *Talwīḥāt*, in *Ouevres philosophiques et mystiques*, ed. Henry Corbin, (Tèhèran-Paris, 1976), Tome I, p. 69.
202. *Ittiḥād* in *Majmū'ah*, pp. 91–92.
203. Bahmanyār's remarks confirm this point. Cf. *Kitāb al-taḥṣīl*, pp. 573–574. In this sense, Gardet's attempt to read Ibn Sīnā's endorsement of the first meaning of unification as lending support to his alleged mysticism is rather misplaced. Cf. Louis Gardet, *La Pensée religieuse d'Avicenne (Ibn Sīnā)* (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1951), pp. 153–157. See Rahman's response to Gardet in *Prophecy in Islam*, pp. 27–28, note 29. Also Davidson, *AlFārābī, Avicenna, and Averroes, on Intellect*, p. 105, note 125.
204. Cf. Averroes, *De Anima*, I. III, comm. in Alain de Libera, *L'intelligence et la pensée*, pp. 101 and 261, note 389. For more on Ibn Rushd's critical and occasionally ambiguous attitude toward Aristotelian commentators, see Goffredo Quadri, *La Philosophie arabe dans l'Europe medievale: Des Origines à Averroès*, (Paris: Payot, 1960), pp. 158–160 and Arthur Hyman, 'Averroes' Theory of the Intellect and the Ancient Commentators' in *Averroes and the Aristotelian Tradition*, ed. Gerhard Endress and Jan Aersten (Leiden, Holland: Brill, 1999), pp. 188–198.
205. For more on this, see Ibn Rushd, *Talkhīṣ kitāb al-nafs* ('Averroes' Middle Commentary on Aristotle's *de Anima*'), p. 128ff; *The Epistle on the Possibility of Conjunction with the Active Intellect by Ibn Rushd with the Commentary of Moses Narboni*, ed. Kalman P. Bland (New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1982); Averroes, *Epitome of Parva Naturalia*, tr. Harry Blumberg (Cambridge, MA: The Medieval Academy of America, 1961), pp. 43–44; Edouard H. Weber, 'L'Identité de l'intellect et de l'intelligible selon la version latine d'Averroés et son interprétation par Thomas D'Aquin', *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy*, Vol. 8 (1998), pp. 233–257; Oliver Leaman, *Averroes and His Philosophy* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon press, 1988), pp. 102–103; Ovey N. Mohammed, *Averroes' Doctrine of Immortality: A Matter of Controversy* (Ontario: The Canadian Corporation for Studies in Religion, 1984), pp. 123–125.
206. See Davidson, *Al Fārābī, Avicenna, and Averroes on Intellect*, pp. 323–324; Arthur Hyman, 'Aristotle's Theory of the Intellect and Its Interpretation by Averroes' pp. 183–185; Paul Sydney Christ, *The*

Psychology of the Active Intellect of Averroes (Philadelphia, 1926), pp. 34–56; Richard Taylor, ''The Future Life' and Averroes's Long Commentary on the De Anima of Aristotle' in *Averroes and the Enlightenment*, ed. M. Wahba and M. Abousenna (New York: Prometheus Books, 1996), pp. 263–277.

207. *Kitāb al-mashāri' wa'l-muṭāraḥāt*, in *Ouevres philosophiques et mystiques*, Tome I, p. 483. At the beginning of the *al-Mashāri'*, Suhrawardī advises his readers to read his 'Peripatetic' works before delving into *Ḥikmat al-ishrāq*. Cf. Ibid., p. 194.
208. Cf. Suhrawardī, *Kitāb al-mashāri' wa'l-muṭāraḥāt*, in *Ouevres philosophiques et mystiques*, Tome I, pp. 474–475. For an evaluation of this point in Suhrawardī's thought, see Hossein Ziai, *Knowledge and Illumination*, pp. 143–145.
209. One can get a glimpse of this view from Suhrawardī's treatment of qualitative transformation (*istiḥālah*): 'What is called 'transformation' takes place when a quality associated with a certain body ceases and another quality takes its place. What is called 'generation and corruption' occurs when one form [associated with a thing] leaves it and another form takes its place.' Suhrawardī, *The Book of Radiance* (*Partawnāma*), tr. Hossein Ziai, (Irvine, CA: Mazda Publishers, 1998), p. 20.
210. Suhrawardī, *al-Mashāri' wa'l-muṭāraḥāt*, in *Ouevres philosophiques et mystiques*, Tome 1, p. 501.
211. In *Oeuvres philosophiques et mystiques*, Tome II, pp. 228–229. Cf. English tr. J. Walbridge and H. Ziai, *The Philosophy of Illumination* (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 1999), p. 148.
212. *Ḥikmat al-ishrāq*, par. 115 and 116.
213. Quṭb al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī, *Durrat al-tāj*, ed. Muḥammad Mishkāt (Tehran, Iran: Intishārāt-i Ḥikmat, AH 1369, 2nd edition), p. 694. Cf. Mehdi Aminrazavi, *Suhrawardī and the School of Illumination*, pp. 102–117; H. Ziai, *Knowledge and Illumination*, pp. 147–166; John Walbridge, *The Leaven of the Ancients: Suhrawardī and the Heritage of the Greeks* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000), pp. 164–171.
214. *Ḥikmat al-ishrāq*, par. 118.
215. Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad Shahrazūrī, *Sharḥ ḥikmat al-ishrāq*, ed. H. Ziai (Tehran, Iran: Institute for Cultural Studies and Research, 1993), p. 301.
216. Quṭb al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī, *Durrat al-tāj*, p. 830.
217. Cf. *Ḥikmat al-ishrāq*, pars. 160–12 where Suhrawardī criticizes the Peripatetic concept of knowledge-through-abstraction as 'negation' (*salbī*). This is one of the major criticisms Ṣadrā levels against Ibn Sīnā, to which I shall turn in the next chapter.
218. Ṣadrā, *Hāshiyah sharḥ ḥikmat al-ishrāq*, (Lithographed edition) p. 210, quoted in Ghulām Ḥusayn Ibrāhīm Dīnānī, *Falsafa-yi Suhrawardī* (Tehran, Iran: Intishārāt-i Ḥikmat, 1376 (AH), 4th edition), p. 217.

II

MULLĀ ṢADRĀ'S THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE AND THE UNIFICATION ARGUMENT

2.1. ṢADRĀ'S ONTOLOGY

Ṣadrā's defense of the unification argument is rooted in his general ontology. Definition of knowledge as a mode of existence is an attempt to redefine epistemology in terms of existence and its modalities. In this sense, Ṣadrā's theory of knowledge is an exercise in his 'gradational ontology.' Very often we find Ṣadrā reverting back to his ontology before discussing a particular problem in epistemology. His constant references to the principality of existence (*aṣālat al-wujūd*) over against essence confirm the ontological weight of his thought. Therefore, we will begin with Ṣadrā's ontological assumptions and work our way to his theory of knowledge and the unification argument.

The first observation Ṣadrā makes concerning existence (*wujūd*) is that it is self-evident (*badīhī*). Although a common theme in Islamic philosophy, this has a particular significance for Ṣadrā's overall purpose to establish existence as the primary reality over against quiddity (*māhiyyah*). He develops a line of argument that can be summarized as follows: in everyday thinking, existential propositions do not present any particular problem. When we say 'there is a tree in the garden' or 'stars exist,' we have an intuitive grasp about the meaning of these statements: a tree, a horse, stars, my neighbor, the school building down the block 'exist.' i.e., they *are* within the realm of concrete and detectable existence. This minimal intuition

about the concrete reality of things is a prerequisite of the human mind, for all of our propositions and judgments depend on it. To stress this point, Ṣadrā borrows the term 'inscription' or 'impression' (*murtasimah*) from Ibn Sīnā[1] and states that the meaning of such self-evident statements is inscribed in our minds without the help of second-order conceptualizations. I know that the tree of which I speak here is an existent out there, presenting itself to me in some cognitive fashion. I have no need to explain the *meaning* of the existence of the tree in front of me other than assuring myself of its concrete existence if it really exists. Since all attempts to define primary concepts result in either infinite regression (*tasalsul*) or tautology (*dawr*), we take such concepts as self-evident.[2]

In this ordinary way of knowing things around us, the *existence* of things does not arise as an epistemic problem. We simply know that something exists. When we want to explain the meaning of the words 'is' and 'exist,' i.e., the copula, however, we are faced with a formidable task. First of all, as Kant would later state, the copula does not furnish us with any new knowledge about our subject. When I say that the tree in front of me exists, this does not say anything about the properties of the tree which distinguish it from other natural beings. Secondly, the absence of the copula in Arabic makes it even further compelling that we can talk about existence and its modalities without employing the copula at all. Thirdly, Ṣadrā argues that we can know something unknown to us by comparing it to more familiar things. But he hastens to add that there is nothing intuitively more known than existence. As Ṣadrā's great commentator Sabzawārī states, 'the notion of existence is one of the best-known things, but its deepest reality is in the extremity of hiddenness.'[3]

We run into a similar difficulty when we try to make existence known (*ta'rīf*) through logical definition (*ḥadd*) and description (*taṣwīr*).[4] A logical definition is based on genus (*jins*) and specific differentia (*faṣl*). When we define man as rational animal, for instance, we refer to his genus 'animal' (*ḥayawān*)

and his differentia 'rational' (*nāṭiq*). Keeping in mind that definitions apply to classes and not to individuals, a genus designates the general category to which 'man' belongs whereas differentia denotes his specific attributes or difference from other members of the category of 'animal.' This, however, does not apply to existence because it has no genus or differentia. The reason is that to have a genus and/or differentia means to include something and exclude others. In logical terms, to be an 'animal' means to exclude the possibility of being a stone or star. But as we intuitively know, there is nothing outside existence, and as the ground of all there is, existence does not leave anything out. Ṣadrā's conclusion is that 'since existence is the most general and inclusive of all things, it has no genus, no differentia and no definition.'[5] Therefore, whoever has thought of explaining existence with some other things has made a grave mistake because existence is more evident than them.'[6]

Nor can existence be described, for description is based on more evident concepts and definitions than the definiendum. As Ṣadrā insists, there is no term or concept known to be more evident and clear than existence despite the fact that we may not always be able to articulate it in such definitive terms. This suggests that existence can be explained only by itself. It is, however, obvious that this is a *petitio principi* and not a definition because defining something by itself begs the question. This leads Ṣadrā to conclude that existence has neither definition nor proof (*burhān*).[7] In short, existence is the most evident of all concepts. This conclusion, however, is misleading if not wrong because it construes existence as a concept rather than a reality *in concreto*. But this is precisely what Ṣadrā ought to avoid if he is to ground all cognition in existence and its modalities. Furthermore, it is by positing existence as a concrete reality that we can make sense of Ṣadrā's claim that the only proper access to the reality of existence is 'illuminative presence' (*ḥuḍūr ishrāqī*) and 'direct witnessing' (*shuhūd 'aynī*).[8]

a. Essence and Existence

In Ṣadrā, the distinction between the concept (*mafhūm*) and reality (*ḥaqiqah*) of existence is of paramount significance and can be considered an extension of the distinction between the order of thought and the order of being. As a mental concept, existence can be compared to a universal: it is applicable to a multitude of objects univocally, remains abstract and generic, and denotes a category and/or class rather than an individual.[9] 'Existence as a concept is a generic term predicated of concrete existents univocally (*bi'l-tafāwut*), not equivocally (*bi'l-tawāṭi'*).'[10] Existence applies to all things that exist whereas an essence applies to a limited number of things as in the case of a genus or species. The essence of man, for instance, applies only to human beings. 'Humanity' as an essence includes certain things and excludes others. But this is not the case with existence. By definition, existence cannot leave anything out. Ṣadrā considers even non-existence (*'adam*) and mental existence (*al-wujūd al-dhihnī*) as a special instance of existence. That is why God has no essence. Essence or quiddity (*māhiyyah*) is shared by a multitude of subjects. But God is the only instance of His kind and no other being can partake of whatever we may conceive of as God's quiddity.

What the mind perceives of the reality of existence is only its mental representation, and this further removes us from the actual reality of things as they are. This is something we cannot escape but perhaps grasp once we understand the distinction between the concept and reality of something:

> Every concrete being represented in the mind with its reality ought to maintain its quiddity despite the change in its modality of existence. The reality of existence is such that it is in the extra-mental world (*fī'l-a'yān*). Everything whose reality is such that it is in the extra-mental world cannot be found in the mind [as it is] otherwise this would lead to the alteration (*inqilāb*) of something from its own reality [into something else]. Therefore the reality of existence cannot be found in any mind. What is represented of

> existence in the soul whereby it takes on universality and generality is not the reality of existence but one of the aspects of its constitution and one of its names. *Asfār*, I, 1, pp. 37–8

The reality of existence in the extra-mental world defies such second-order conceptualizations. Ṣadrā holds that every individual substance is a unique being that participates in the all-inclusive reality of existence. Everything is an instantiation and 'particularization' (*takhaṣṣuṣ*) of existence which unfolds itself in a myriad of ways, modes, states, and degrees.[11] The universals which we use to designate existence as a concept do not belong to existence itself; they apply only to its 'degrees of descent.' Ṣadrā's extremely critical attitude toward representation (*irtisām*) is a result of his concern that representation becomes a substitute for reality and that we are somehow deluded into thinking that our mental representation of things through 'meanings' and concepts reveal their true nature:

> The reality of existence-qua-existence is not limited by generality and delimitation, universality and particularity, and inclusiveness and specificity. It is neither one [numerically] by a oneness added to it, nor many.... In its essence, it is nothing but full realization, actuality and manifestation. These meanings of contingency, concepts of universality, attributes of rational consideration, and terms of mental analysis are attached to it on account of its degrees and stations. *Asfār*, I, 1, p. 259

Ṣadrā analyzes the concept and reality of existence from two closely related standpoints. The first corresponds to the common-sense view of existence mentioned above, i.e., to look at existence through its individual instances. Obviously this includes everything because nothing can be outside the realm of existence. The two frequent examples given to illustrate this are the mathematical and natural sciences where the particular aspects of things rather than their universal qualities are investigated. Ṣadrā states this obviously Aristotelian point[12] as follows: 'Mathematical objects and their specific qualities are

studied in mathematics (*al-riyāḍiyyāt*)…natural objects have their own accidents and are studied in the natural sciences (*al-ṭabī'iyyāt*). By the same token, the existent-qua-existent has its own specific aspects and they are studied in metaphysics (*al-'ilm al-ilāhī*).'[13]

This brings us to the second context of analysis where the proper subject matter of metaphysics is existence-qua-existence (*al-wujūd bimā huwa'l-wujūd*).[14] In the first case, we deal with existence through its instances that partake of it univocally. Anything that exists can be taken to be an instance of existence, and this yields some information about existence, its states and modes. The reality of existence, however, cannot be relegated to the sum-total of its instantiations. Existence is not a property of things by which we define them; rather it is the very reality by virtue of which things exist. If this is warranted, then existence is more than what its particular instances amount to. In contrast to Quine and Rorty, existence is neither a thing nor a property of things and thus cannot be construed as the 'value of a variable.'[15] Things do *have* attributes but as far as their existence is concerned, they can only *be*. Ṣadrā's following description of existence makes this point clear: 'Existence, insofar as it is existence, has no agent from which it emanates, no matter into which it transforms, no subject in which it is found, no form by which it is clothed, no goal for which it is [established]. Rather, it itself is the agent of all agents, the form of all forms, and the goal of all goals.'[16]

Treatment of existence as an absolute term in and of itself is a common theme in the classical ontology of Greek and Islamic philosophy. We should remember that Aristotle had introduced the notion of existence-qua-existence[17] without pursuing it in any helpful way. This was in part due to the peculiar nature of the verb 'to be' in Greek. The Greeks did not have a distinct verb meaning 'to exist' as a generic term. Instead, they used the verb 'to be' in a predicative context, i.e., in relation to a particular being. 'To be' always meant to be a tree, a pen, a wall, a woman.[18] To use Kahn's example, 'for a particular tree to exist

is for it to be a living oak or chestnut. For white *to exist* is *to be a color*, that is a quality, belonging to some particular substance.'[19] Existence does not arise as a distinct philosophical problem in Greek thought because the predicative context of the Greek verb 'to be' allows us to translate all existential propositions that have the form 'x is' into 'x is something.' In other words, we always speak of existence through its particular instances. This explains to a large extent the reason why for Aristotle the primary subject matter of 'first philosophy,' i.e., metaphysics was substance, for substance is a definite and definable entity to which various existential properties can be attributed.[20] In sharp contrast, Ṣadrā insists that existence is neither a substance nor an accident 'because both are parts of what actually exists (*al-mawjūd*) but existence is not what exists in actuality.'[21]

At this juncture, Islamic philosophy represents a major break away from the Greek concept of existence. It is true that the Muslim philosophers have preserved the predicative context of existence in logic and physics. We find elaborate discussions of substances and their accidental properties in Ṣadrā as well as the other philosophers before him. In fact, a good part of classical philosophy of nature revolves around these concepts. Existence as a distinct philosophical problem, however, arises fully when Greek philosophy is revised in light of what Kahn calls 'a metaphysics of creation.'[22] Within the purview of this new metaphysical vision, contingent beings *ultimately* borrow their existence from another source by virtue of being created.

Historically speaking, this took place in full force when Muslim philosophers introduced the idea of the ontological contingency of the world as part of the Islamic doctrine of creation. Whether we define creation as emanation with Muslim Peripatetics, *creatio ex nihilo* with the theologians, or perpetual creation and 'theophany' (*tajallī*) with the Sufis, the idea of radical contingency takes precedence over the Greek notions of the *world as a given*. Something fundamental is gained in philosophy from this obviously religio-theological principle:

existence as the reality or principle which makes the world what it is cannot be relegated to its modalities (*anḥā'*) or concomitants (*lawāzim*). We have to look somewhere else to understand what it means to exist in the first place. This leads us to two important conclusions. First, it affirms the ontological contingency of the world in a radical way: not only that things might have been different than what they actually are but, more importantly, they may not have *existed* at all. Second, it confirms once more that existence cannot be taken to be a property of individuals or classes to which they belong. Substance is no longer the proper starting point for the study of existence. Instead of construing existence as an effect of substances that exist in actuality, as Aristotle has done, Ṣadrā reverses the picture and turns all substances into a modality of existence.

A further distinction is made between existence and essence. A preliminary version of this distinction can be traced back to Plato (*Phaedo* 74a, *Republic* 509b, *Timaeus* 50c) and Aristotle (*Posterior Analytics* 92 b–93a and *Metaphysics* 1003–1004). Yet the distinction does not assume any philosophical significance until al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā.[23] With them, the distinction becomes a cornerstone of the metaphysical study of beings, and rests on two basic questions: *is* it and *what* is it? The first question concerns the reality of things in the external world and confirms their existence *in concreto*. When I think of a mountain, the first question I ask is whether it exists or not. The same question can be asked even of things that subsist in the mind. In either case, my question is one of ontological assertion or lack thereof.

The second question pertains to the *what-ness* of the mountain, i.e., *what* it is that I am investigating. Granted that the mountain in question does really exist in some detectable way, my next question will be about its attributes, size, color, location, etc. It is here that we enter the domain of essences or quiddities (*māhiyyah*).[24] The questions we ask about things and their attributes help us assert the existence of something and state its differences from others.[25] In this broad sense, existence is a generic term in which all things participate: man, tree, horse, and

the sun share the quality of existence univocally. What distinguishes them from one another is their quiddity given in the form of such definitions as 'man is a rational animal' and 'accidents do not subsist by themselves.'

Actually existing things, however, are not composed of two things, 'existence' on the one hand, and 'quiddity' on the other, which we antecedently put together and turn into a single unity. It is the opposite: they are single units and we divide them into compartments through conceptual analysis. Therefore the distinction is not a real one. It is rather what Ṣadrā calls a 'rational operation of the mind' (*i'tibār al-'aql*).[26] It is imposed by the mind which can perceive only quiddities as universal properties of things.[27] Actually existing beings are not affected by these universal properties:

> Beings (*wujūdāt*) are actual identities particularized by themselves. They are not qualified by genus, species, universality and particularity in the sense that they belong to a species or genus or in the sense that they become particular through something added to them from outside. Rather, they are differentiated by themselves, not through differentia (*faṣl*) or accident (*'araḍ*). In this sense, they have no genus, differentia or definition.[28]

In the case of actually existing beings, what we have is not concepts but actualization (*taḥaṣṣul*), actuality (*fi'liyyah*), and disclosure (*ẓuhūr*).[29]

Ṣadrā takes a further step and argues that quiddities are nothing but various modes and particularizations of existence, which the mind constructs as abstract and generic qualities. Ṣadrā's radical claim is that in mental analysis, essence precedes existence because the mind can conceive only the universal properties of things. Going back to our example of the mountain, I can conceptualize a mountain in my mind without 'establishing' (*ithbāt*) its concrete existence in the extra-mental world. I can speak of it in many different ways, analyze and describe it without ever asking the 'is-it?' question.[30] The reality of things, however, is such that existence precedes essence because an

essence that is not existentiated in one way or another cannot be said to be an essence in the first place. Ṣadrā summarizes his arguments as follows:

> …essence is united with existence *in concreto* in a kind of essential unity (*ittiḥād*). When the mind analyzes them into two things, it asserts the precedence of one over the other *in concreto*. Now, this [reality that precedes the other] is existence because it is the principle in being the reality emanating from the [First] Principle (*al-mabda'*). As for the essence, it is united with and predicated of existence not like an attached accident but in its own reality [as essentially united with existence]. Insofar as the mind is concerned, the essence precedes the latter [i.e., existence] because essence is the principle in mental judgments. *Asfār*, I, 1, p. 56

There is a sense in which we can say that existence refers to the actual reality of things whereas essence refers to their existence in the mind. Ṣadrā insists that 'the reality of existence and its truth is not found in the mind; what arises in the mind concerning existence is a kind of mental abstraction. But this is also one of the aspects of existence.'[31] Yet, what we have is not two different beings but a single reality seen from two different points of view. They correspond to what Ṣadrā calls the two modes of external and mental existence, and the relation between them is comparable to the relation between a universal that applies to a multitude of individuals and an individual that partakes of that universal. In Ṣadrā's words, 'the relation of abstracted conceptual existence (*al-wujūd intizā'ī*) to real existence (*al-wujūd al-ḥaqīqī*) is like the relation of 'humanity' (*al-insāniyyah*) to an individual human being (*al-insān*), and of whiteness to a white object. Its relation to essence is like the relation of humanity to he who laughs and whiteness to snow.'[32] While particular existents are constructed in the mind as essences with a number of universal qualities, they remain particular and real existents as they are. The source of such 'mental effects' is nothing but 'real existences which themselves are actual ipseities (*huwiyyah 'ayniyyah*) existing by themselves, not conceptual existences

which are intellectual things with no concrete existence in the external world.'[33]

The fact that knowing the essence of something conceptually is not the same as knowing its reality is further corroborated by the limits of mental existence. To quote Ṣadrā again: 'It is rationally clear that nobility, happiness, and joy are not found in perceiving the essences of particulars but in their existence. By the same token, taste is not perceiving the essence of what is tasteful but its actual realization by the faculty of perception. Not everyone who thinks of the essence of power is a king and not everyone who thinks of the essence of might is a hero.'[34] This underscores the essential difference between the concept and reality of things. But they also point to another distinction Ṣadrā draws between mental existence and 'something being in the mind.'

> The meaning of something existing in the external world is that it has an existence from which particular effects result and specific states (*aḥkām*) emanate. Its being in the mind is not like this. [But] the meaning of the mental existence of something is not merely its being in the soul or in the faculty of perception otherwise such qualities that exist in the soul as knowledge and power for those who know and those who have strength will be mental entities. Obviously this is not the case; otherwise it would be a contradiction.
> *Aṣālah* in *Majmu'ah*, p. 191

The upshot of the foregoing considerations is the *ultimate* reducibility of essence to existence. As we shall see shortly, Ṣadrā's notion of the primacy of existence (*aṣālat al-wujūd*) invites this conclusion, and it plays a pivotal role in his definition of knowledge as a mode of existence.

b. The Primacy and Gradation of Existence

The primacy of existence over essence is one of the central themes of Ṣadrā's ontology and has important consequences for his concept of knowledge. The word *aṣālah*, meaning to be

principal and primary, refers to that which is real and which gives actual reality to existents in the extra-mental world.[35] It accounts for both ontological affirmation and epistemic credibility—the two qualities that the really existing beings have. Existence as principal reality establishes things in concrete existence and saturates them with meaning. If this is true, then deciding on this 'principal reality' is no trivial matter since it can land us in an 'existentialist' metaphysics as in the case of Ṣadrā or an 'essentialist' one as in the case of Suhrawardī and most of the Mutakallimūn.

Ṣadrā asks whether existence or essence has a corresponding *reality* in the external world. Before turning to Ṣadrā's response, however, it is important to note that in defending existence as the principal reality, Ṣadrā works against the backdrop of both the Peripatetic and Illuminationist traditions. Ibn Sīnā had simply stated the distinction between existence and essence without bringing up the question of *aṣālah*, for his primary concern was to lay out a tripartite division of existents as impossible (*mumtani'*), contingent (*mumkin*) and necessary (*wājib*), and draw a categorical distinction between the last two, i.e., the created and the Creator.[36]

While Ibn Sīnā's works do not contain a clear discussion of the primacy of existence, they can be read to support either position. The key issue for Ibn Sīnā's medieval interpreters especially in the Latin West was his alleged espousal of the accidentality of existence. The problem stems from Ibn Sīnā's somewhat recondite analysis of how existence is related to essence.[37] In the *Mubāhathāt*, for instance, he says that 'existence is an accident in things with quiddities to which existence is attached as we see in the case of ten categories.'[38] He then adds that 'but in the case of that which exists by itself, it does not have an existence by which it exists apart from being an accident for it. It is therefore a necessity that it exist by itself.' In spite of this clarification, St. Thomas Aquinas and other Scholastic philosophers read Ibn Sīnā as arguing that existence is an accident conferred upon things antecedently: things exist and

their quiddities require existence only as an accident or attribute. Interestingly enough, this (mis)reading of Ibn Sīnā goes back to Ibn Rushd.[39]

Ṣadrā and his followers, however, took a different approach and interpreted Ibn Sīnā as saying that existence is a 'special accident' in the case of contingent beings (*mumkin al-wujūd*) because the existence of contingent beings is a 'borrowed existence' and depends on the Necessary Being for their subsistence.[40] This implies that contingent beings 'receive' their existence from another source, namely from the Necessary Being or, to use the language of theology, from 'high on.' In this onto-theological scheme, existence is an 'attribute' granted to created things by God who, as the Necessary Being, sustains them in existence. We may also conceive existence as an accident (*'araḍ*) 'happening' to things because their concrete existence is not required by mental abstraction or, as Aristotle would say, by definition. As we shall see shortly, existence is an accident only when considered from the point of view of logical analysis. As far as extra-mental existence (*al-wujūd al-'aynī*) is concerned, however, existence is not added to things *a posteriori*, otherwise we would have to say that things can 'exist' without 'existence' because it is only an accident—a logically absurd conclusion. Ṣadrā thus concurs with Ibn Sīnā that the existence of something is its actual existence (*mawjūdiyyah*) in the extra-mental world, not something added to its essence.[41]

When we turn to Suhrawardī, whom Ṣadrā has once called the 'Divine master' (*al-shaykh al-ilāhī*) and 'the possessor of lights,'[42] the problem receives a different treatment. Suhrawardī founded a metaphysics of essences when he defined essence as the sole agent that constitutes the reality of things. He proposed two objections against the primacy of existence. First, if we take existence as a real attribute of essence, he argued, then essence, in order to have this attribute, has to exist prior to existence in which case existence would be a quality of something which already exists.[43] Secondly, if existence is taken to be the real constituent of reality, then existence will have to exist before

being a constituent of external reality and this second existence will have to exist, and so on *ad infinitum*.[44] In conclusion, existence cannot constitute the reality of things.

Suhrawardī's conclusion was a turning point in the history of Islamic metaphysics. He argued that existence is only a generic term, a secondary intelligible (*ma'qūl thānī*) applicable to a multitude of objects but to which nothing concrete corresponds in the extra-mental world. In a sense, this is a reformulation of the peculiar nature of the copula mentioned above: ontologically speaking, the copula is dysfunctional in that it does not add anything to our knowledge of things. Ṣadrā rejects this deduction by saying that we cannot logically say 'existence exists' just as we do not say 'whiteness is white.' Existence exists by itself and the actualization of existence in the external world takes place by itself, not by virtue of something else.[45] Therefore existence is not something that *has* existence just as whiteness is not something that *has* whiteness.[46] Whiteness is that reality by virtue of which things are white. By the same token, existence is that very reality by virtue of which things exist.

For Ṣadrā, Suhrawardī's false conclusion arises out of his failure to distinguish between the concept and reality of existence.[47] It is true, Ṣadrā reasons, that existence, when conceived by the mind, is a general notion without any corresponding reality in the extra-mental world. It is at this level of abstraction that we take existence as an attribute of something. That is why we can think of essences without their actual existence in the physical world.[48] It is then logical to conclude that existence as a secondary intelligible cannot be a basis for the reality of actually existing things.[49] The reality of existence, however, defies such a definition. Even though at the level of conceptual analysis one is allowed to say that existence is 'something that has existence' (*shay' lahu al-wujūd*), its basic structure is such that it is existence by itself or existent *par excellence* (*al-wujūd huwa al-mawjūdiyyah*).[50] Existence is 'reality and realization (*taḥaqquq*) itself, not something that is realized.'[51] Ṣadrā's conclusion is thus diametrically opposed to

that of Suhrawardī: existence is not an extraneous quality imposed upon existent entities but the very reality thanks to which they exist.[52]

In rejecting Suhrawardī's essentialist ontology, Ṣadrā reiterates an old issue in Islamic philosophy and asks whether existence is a predicate or not. The word 'predicate' is used here in its logical sense as denoting some property or attribute of actually existing things. Muslim philosophers have usually answered this question in the negative and made a distinction between the logical and ontological senses of existential propositions.[53] From a logical point of view, we can analyze the sentence 'this table is brown' into a subject and predicate. The subject of the sentence, 'this table,' is a noun and the predicate, 'brown' also a noun and an attribute qualifying the table.[54] We can turn this sentence, composed of a subject and a predicate, into an existential proposition by saying that 'the table is,' 'the table exists,' or 'the table is an existent.' When we look at these sentences from a logical point of view, existence, stated by the copula 'is,' turns out to be a predicate and attribute qualifying the table. From the ontological point of view, however, the conclusion is absurd because it assumes the existence of the table prior to its having existence as an attribute.

Al-Fārābī was the first to note this difficulty. He proposed two ways of looking at such propositions. In the proposition 'man exists,' existence, al-Fārābī says, is both a predicate and not a predicate. From a 'logical point of view' (*al-nāẓir al-manṭiqī*), the sentence has a predicate because it is composed of two terms, subject and predicate, and is liable of being true or false. From a 'natural point of view' (*al-nāẓir al-ṭabi'ī*), which here means the ontological point of view, however, it does not have a predicate because the 'existence of something is nothing other than itself.'[55] The most important conclusion that Ṣadrā derives from this analysis is that existence is not an attribute conferred upon things antecedently. It is their very reality and makes them what they are. For Ṣadrā, this is another proof for the primacy of existence.

Having established existence as the principal reality, Ṣadrā turns to the question of how it applies to individual entities, which he calls 'shares of existence' (*khiṣaṣ al-wujūd*). We can summarize his analysis as follows. Existence is predicated of all things that exist *in concreto*. In this most generic sense, existence applies to things univocally (*ḥaml bi'l-tawaṭi'*). Predication, however, takes place with varying degrees of intensity. To give an example, light is predicated of the candle, the moon and the sun univocally in that they all participate in the quality of light, luminosity and brightness. Each of these beings, however, displays different degrees of intensity in reflecting light. Light is the most intense and brightest in the sun and weakest in the reflection of the moon on the pool. By the same token, existence is predicated univocally of necessary and contingent beings. Their share of existence, however, is not the same because a necessary being, say God, is ontologically prior and superior to contingent beings. Having the most intense state of existence, God has more 'existence' than other things. The same analogy holds true for cause and effect since cause, by definition, precedes effect: it causes the effect to be what it is, and this imparts on it a higher ontological status. Ṣadrā calls this kind of predication 'equivocal predication' (*ḥaml bi'l-tashkīk*).[56] When applied to existence, it is called the 'gradation of existence' (*tashkīk al-wujūd*).[57]

> As for its equivocal predication by primacy, priority, precedence and intensity, this is so because, as we shall explain, existence requires itself in some beings, has precedence in some in terms of its nature, and is more perfect and stronger in some others. A being that has no cause has priority in existence compared to others, and is by definition prior to all other beings. By the same token, the existence of each one of the active intellects has a priority over the existence of other intellects, and the existence of substance is prior to the existence of accident. *Asfār*, I, 1, p. 36

This paragraph, which is taken almost verbatim from Bahmanyār,[58] shows how Ṣadrā uses *tashkīk* as a term of ontology rather than

logic. This helps Ṣadrā construct a hierarchical view of existence whereby things are defined in proportion to their 'ontological intensity' or lack thereof. Since equivocality implies different degrees and grades of existence, I shall call this 'gradational ontology.' Ṣadrā applies gradation to the entire spectrum of existence: things partake of existence with different degrees of intensity and diminution, strength and weakness, priority and posterity, perfection and imperfection. As we shall see below, this hierarchy also applies to the order of intelligibility. In fact, Ṣadrā explains degrees of knowledge in the same way he explains degrees of existence. There is nothing surprising about this because Ṣadrā defines intelligibility as an aspect of existence: the more 'beingful' something is, the more intelligible it is.

2.2. EXISTENCE, INTELLIGIBILITY AND KNOWLEDGE

Before embarking upon a full discussion of knowledge, Ṣadrā broaches the subject with a number of observations on the elusive and 'mysterious' nature of knowledge. In a condensed section of the *Asfār* entitled 'Concerning That Intellection Consists of the Unification of the Substance of the Intellector (*al-'āqil*) with the Intellected (*al-ma'qūl*),' he identifies our ability to know as the most difficult and baffling problem of philosophy. The fact that we are able to know ourselves and the world around us is a mystery, Ṣadrā states, and the riddle cannot be solved within the matrix of sense-perception or knowledge as representation. The difficult question is not what kind of a relation, say a relation of correspondence or coherence, we can establish between the intellect and its object of intellection. Rather, it is the soul's ability to perceive the *intelligibilia* in the first place. Ṣadrā appeals to a historical aphorism to make his point:

> The fact that the soul is able to intellect the forms of intelligible things is the most mysterious and obscure problem of philosophy, which none of the scholars of Islam has been able to solve up to our own day. When we looked at the difficulty of this problem and pondered over the question that knowledge of substance is substance and accident, we did not find what cures the disease and what quenches the thirst in the books of the people [i.e., philosophers], especially those of their master Abū 'Alī [Ibn Sīnā] like the *Shifā'*, *al-Najāt*, *al-Ishārāt*, *'Uyūn al-ḥikmah* and others. Rather, what we have found among his group, peers and followers such as his student Bahmanyār,[59] the master of the followers of the Stoics (*al-riwāqiyyīn*),[60] Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī, and others who came after them, is that they did not propose anything on which one could rely. If this is the case with those who are considered the most respected [in philosophy], think of the situation of the people of fanciful thoughts and imaginations, and those who are the first and foremost in discussions and dialectical argumentation. *Asfār*, I, 3, pp. 312–313

The difficulty is further augmented by the fact that knowledge, like existence, does not lend itself to easy definitions. Definition of knowledge is circular in that every time we try to define it, we are bound to do it through knowledge. We cannot exclude the term 'knowledge' from its definition. Ṣadrā points to a strong parallel between knowledge (*'ilm*) considered from this point of view and existence that defies definition. He takes this to be a first step toward constructing knowledge as a 'mode of existence' (*naḥw al-wujūd*):

> It seems that knowledge is among those realities whose ipseity (*inniyyah*) is identical with its essence (*māhiyyah*). Realities of this kind cannot be defined because definition consists of genus and difference, both of which are universals whereas every being is a particular reality by itself. It cannot be made known through complete description either because there is nothing more known than knowledge as it is an existential state of consciousness (*ḥālah wijdāniyyah*)[61] which the knower, being alive, finds in his essence from the very beginning without veil or obscurity. It is not [in the nature of knowledge] to allow itself to be known by something more apparent and clear because everything becomes clear to the intellect

> by the knowledge it has. How does then knowledge become clear by anything other than itself? *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 278

Even though the tautological and non-definitional nature of knowledge represents common sense epistemology in Islamic thought and is shared by various schools,[62] this is where Ṣadrā takes his departure from the tradition when he subsumes knowledge (*ʻilm*) and other related terms under the intrinsic intelligibility of existence. For Ṣadrā, the ultimate object of knowledge is existence for when we say that we know something, we affirm or deny a particular aspect of existence presented as an object of knowledge.[63] This is underlined by Ṣadrā's radical identification of existence and truth/reality (*ḥaqīqah*): 'The reality of every thing is its existence through which it receives the effects specific to it, for the 'being-ness' (*mawjūdiyyah*) of something and its having a reality/truth have one single meaning and one single subject, there being no difference between the two except in expression (*lafẓ*).'[64] Existence is thus the standing condition of knowledge and precedes the discursive considerations of the knowing subject.[65]

Furthermore, to know something is to grasp and appropriate its intelligible form (*al-ṣūrat al-maʻqūlah*). Ṣadrā's conceptual realism leads him to define intelligible forms as substances that belong to the world of the *intelligibilia* rather than as mere concepts, notions or contents of the mind.[66] The key issue is to understand the ontological status of the intelligible world from which the intellect obtains intelligible forms. Following the neo-Platonist tradition, Ṣadrā establishes the world of the *intelligibilia* as an independent realm of existence where the archetypal realities of individual beings reside. In a strictly hierarchical scale of existence, the sensate objects are placed at a lower ontological plane because they are dim reflections of the world of Platonic Ideas. In Ṣadrā's terms 'material forms are nothing but icons and moulds of these disembodied [i.e., intelligible] forms.'[67] Similarly, 'the disembodied existence (*al-wujūd al-mufāriqī*) is stronger [in actualization] than the material existence

(*al-wujūd al-māddī*).'[68] Since 'intelligible forms' exist in an immutable world above the world of generation and corruption, they enjoy universality and permanence. The radical distinction that Plato and his followers had drawn between the *sensibilia* and the *intelligibilia* is fully incorporated with a clear sense of ontological superiority: since the *intelligibilia* are not bound by such material conditions as generation and corruption or movement and rest, they enjoy a higher ontological status. The sensible world is too ephemeral and fragile to be a ground for the enduring identity of things. The epistemological corollary of this view is no less significant: since the *intelligibilia* are grounded in the immutable world of the Forms, they are cognitively more reliable than the senses. The senses through which we come to experience the *sensibilia* help us establish the corporeal reality of things. Their meaning, i.e., intelligible structure, however, is disclosed by the intellect when it turns to the world of the *intelligibilia*.

Ṣadrā draws a good part of his conclusions concerning the *intelligibilia* from a realist ontology of intelligible forms. For him, the mode of existence proper to intelligible forms is higher than the mode of existence proper to material substances. At its face value, this is nothing more than a refined statement of the distinction between *sensibilia* and *intelligibilia* just mentioned. The way Ṣadrā uses it, however, reveals the extent to which he wants to formulate the question of knowledge in terms of existence and its modalities.

Now, it is further assumed that the order of intelligibility enjoys a higher ontological status because it transcends the limitations of corporeality. Intelligible forms have a concrete existence of their own; in fact, they are more concrete and 'powerful' than corporeal substances. In Ṣadrā's terms, 'the realization of perceptual forms in the perceiving substance is stronger in terms of actualization (*taḥṣīl*) and perfection (*takmīl*) than the realization of natural forms in matter and its kinds.'[69] This explains why for Ṣadrā and the Platonists before him, the 'intellective horse' (*al-faras al-'aqlī*), i.e., the intelligible reality

of the horse is more 'real' than the physical horse in the barn: the intellective horse is a simple unique being containing in its simplicity the lower species and instances of 'horse-ness.'[70] The 'real' horse is not the physical horse composed of flesh and bones but the archetypal horse detached and disembodied from the entanglements of material existence. An individual horse may die, disappear, and come in various colors, sizes, and types, all of which lend themselves to impermanency and imperfection whereas the intellective horse remains constant and provides the context within which we attribute various 'meaning-properties' to the physical horse. Ṣadrā states this as follows:

> These forms [i.e., the archetypal forms] are more exalted and nobler than what is to be found in lower existents. This animal in flesh, composed of contradictory qualities and forms in constant change, is a parable and shadow for the simple animal while there is still a higher [animal] above it. Now, this is the intellective animal which is simple, singular, and containing in its simplicity all of the individual instances and classes of material and mental existence under its species. And this is its universal archetype, i.e., the intellective horse. This holds true for all species of animals and other existents…. When the existence of something intensifies, it passes from its present species to a higher one even though every intensification takes place with full involvement in its current species. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 304

To establish the ontological status of intelligible beings as 'more' and 'higher,' Ṣadrā adopts a well-established Aristotelian principle[71] and defines intelligibility as incorporeality and disembodiment (*tajarrud*). In the Peripatetic ontology of disembodiment, the more removed a thing is from corporeality, the closer it is to have more meanings or meaning-properties. Put differently, the further removed a thing is from its material accidents (*'awārid*) and attachments (*lawāḥiq*), the more real it is because it is closer to its 'formal' (*al-ṣūrī*) reality. The possibility of a substance becoming more intense in intelligibility is proportionate to its being disengaged and disembodied from

the limitations of material existence. Such a thing is more real in the sense that it contains more qualities of intelligibility.[72] The symmetrical relationship between ontological intensity and epistemic credibility is borne out by the fact that 'every existent is a witness to its own existence because it is a glimpse of it. And whatever is closer to existence [in terms of actualization] is a more complete witness to it.'[73]

The difficulties posed by individual substances versus their universal properties are notorious. Aristotle admits the difficulties of accepting true universal knowledge as based on corresponding universal principles of existence.[74] This can be interpreted as a paradigm case of the unity of the ontological and the noetic mentioned above but the question that demands answer is this: how can a substance, which, for Aristotle, is what really and primarily exists, become more intelligible and thus more 'real' when it is less of an individual and more of a universal? If 'every perception is particular and through a corporeal instrument,' as Ibn Sīnā says,[75] then how do we account for the uniqueness of individual beings against the fact that some universal attributes are predicated of them? It is not always easy to find a satisfactory answer to this conundrum either in Aristotle or in his Muslim followers. After all, this is the perennial challenge of the empiricists.[76]

The asymmetrical relationship between disembodiment and intelligibility leads to a tripartite division of knowledge, whose formulation in Islamic philosophy goes back to Ibn Sīnā. When a substance is completely immersed in matter and corporeality, it is called sensation (*ḥiss*) and forms the basis of sense-perception. For Ibn Sīnā and Ṣadrā, this level represents the minimal definition of existence and knowledge: sense-perception is not only the 'weakest' form of perception but also corresponds to the lowest level of existence. When a substance is partially disembodied from matter, it is called 'imagination' (*khayāl*) and represents the intermediary stage or isthmus (*barzakh*) between matter and pure intelligibles. This corresponds to *mundus imaginalis* (*'ālam al-khayāl*) through which we move from the

purely sensate and material to the intelligible and the spiritual. Finally, when something is completely disengaged from material attachments, it becomes a pure intellect (*‘aql*) and intelligible (*ma‘qūl*), making intellection (*ta‘aqqul*) possible.[77]

a. Disembodiment as Intelligibility and Gradation in Knowledge

To further elaborate this point, Ṣadrā returns to the gradation of existence and argues that things are subject to intensification (*tashaddud*) and diminution (*taḍa‘‘uf*) in accord with their level of existentiation. Ṣadrā tries to do this by redefining the Aristotelian framework of potential and actual substances within the context of his gradational ontology. The principle of gradation establishes a hierarchical world-order within which substances belong to differing degrees of existence and intelligibility. When a being realizes its dormant potentialities and becomes actual, it does not simply acquire more material or sensate properties. Rather, it intensifies in existence. To bring this into sharper focus, Ṣadrā reverses common-sense ontology. Instead of defining the necessary existential properties of things (*lawāzim al-wujūd*) as qualities acquired by a substance, he construes them as various modes and states of existence. When a red apple ripens, its existence ‘increases in’ redness rather than becoming ‘more red’ in quantity. By the same token, when substances actualize their potentialities and become more perfect, they eventually increase in existence. This is predicated upon the Platonic principle that actuality implies perfection while potentiality signifies privation and imperfection. In the language of Greek and Muslim Neoplatonists, actuality means full realization because such a substance is not deprived of any real qualities it may possess. By contrast, a potential substance is marred by imperfection because it can be really what it is only to the extent to which it realizes its potentialities, and it would need an external agent, a *more* actualized substance, to reach this state of actuality.[78] Obviously, it is only God who can be properly

called actual and perfect because unlike contingent beings, there is no distinction between God's essence and existence.[79]

The potentiality-actuality framework, which Ṣadrā adopts with some revisions, is also underlined by the Peripatetic idea of hylomorphism. Hylomorphism identifies two principles in things: matter (*hylé*) and form (*morphos*). Matter refers to the physical constitution of things while form is the principle that gives structure, order and meaning to them. It is important to emphasize that Aristotelian hylomorphism does not posit matter and form as 'things' or entities but rather as *principles* of existence thanks to which actual substances become what they are. In Ṣadrā's revised version, assuming a form and becoming actual is the same as assuming a new mode of existence. This is evinced by the fact that matter as the hylé or prime matter (*al-māddat al-ūlā*) is not an aggregate of material stuff out of which corporeal things are made. Rather, it is pure capacity (*isti'dād maḥḍ*)[80] and can be actualized only when united with its proper form.[81] Similarly, form is not shape but that which imparts upon a thing its meaning by making it what it is.[82] This definition of form, which is ontological and Platonic in essence, comes close to the meaning of essence (*māhiyyah*): it is that which makes a thing what it is. Ṣadrā does not shy away from equating form with a particular aspect of existence.

> In our view, what is meant by the form of a thing is its existence, not its concept and universal meaning. [In this sense], form is one and simple for everything. But it may become applicable to various meanings and attributes of perfection. Or, it may not be so, and this is because existence can be strong and intense or weak and deficient. Whenever existence is stronger and more intense, it contains in itself more meanings and effects (*āthār*) and vice versa. *Ittiḥād* in *Majmū'ah*, p. 90[83]

It is these 'meaning and effects' that the mind can properly claim to know for they correspond to what is universal in individual beings. It is only the forms that the mind can know because they are both actual and disengaged from matter. Form as a mode of

disembodiment and intelligibility underlies Ṣadrā's assertion that the further removed a thing is from corporeal existence, the closer it is to pure intelligibility. The *intelligibilia* are distinguished by their disembodiment and universality whereas the *sensibilia* are defined as belonging to matter.[84] In a typical passage, Ṣadrā explains this as follows:

> Forms of things are of two kinds. The first is the material form that subsists with matter, position, space, and so on. This kind of form, due to its mode of material existence, can be neither intelligible in actuality nor sensible (*maḥsūsah*) except accidentally. The second kind is the form that is disengaged from matter, position and space either completely, in which case it is an intelligible form in actuality, or partially in which case it is an imaginal or sensate form in actuality. It has become clear in the view of all the philosophers that the existence of the intelligible form in actuality and its existence for the intellector are one and the same thing from one point of view. In the same way, the existence of a sensible, insofar as it is a sensible, is identical with its existence for the sensate substance. *Asfār*, I, 3, pp. 313–314

Disembodiment as a condition of intelligibility is thus an important step toward subsuming all cognitive terms under the rubric of existence. There is, however, another side to it, which should be briefly mentioned here. An ontologically higher substance is defined as simply 'more' in terms of its existential constitution. But such a substance is also more perfect, more real, more reliable, and more likely to be the immediate concern of the philosopher. We can even say that ontologically higher beings are closer to meeting the criteria of the Platonic trinity of being true, good, and beautiful, corresponding to knowledge, ethics, and aesthetics, respectively. This explains the reason why Ṣadrā defines existence as pure light (*al-nūr*) and says that 'existence and light are one and the same thing.'[85] Light represents 'goodness' and this is always in sharp contrast to darkness that corresponds to non-existence and relative evil. Using another vocabulary taken from Ibn Sīnā and Ibn al-'Arabī,

Ṣadrā defines existence as goodness *par excellence* (*khayr maḥḍ*, *summun bonum*) because existence is not only the ontic ground of sensate objects but also the source of such valuational qualities as reality, meaning, goodness, beauty and perfection. This means that the language of ontological states is saturated with qualitative and valuational terms. Ontological states are intertwined with axiological qualities.

The following depiction of the world of the *intelligibilia*, which Ṣadrā quotes from the *Theology of Aristotle*, provides a neat summary of the axiological content of existence:

> The higher world is the perfect living [reality] in which everything is contained, for it has originated from the first perfect source. In it is to be found every soul and every intellect, and there is absolutely no indigence and need here since things therein are all filled with richness and life as if it is life that exceeds and gushes forth. The life of these things issues forth from one single source, not just from one single heat (warmth) or one single wind (smell). Rather, all of them are one single quality in which is to be found every food [i.e., livelihood for them]. *Ittiḥād* in *Majmū'ah*, p. 100[86]

Ṣadrā gives his version as follows:

> There are two worlds: the world of disengaged substances that pertain to the intellect and the soul, and the world of luminous and dark bodies. The world of disembodied substances is the world of knowledge and vitality in which God created a perceptual, intellective and imaginal form vis-à-vis what is to be found in the world of physical bodies, which is their life and the mirror of their appearance. The Divine Book refers to this: 'For those who of their Lord's Presence stand in fear, two gardens [of paradise are readied]' (Qur'ān 55:46). Concerning this matter, the noble Plato has said that the world is of two kinds: the world of the intellect in which are to be found the intellective Forms (*muthul*), and the world of sense (*ḥiss*) in which are to be found the obscurities of sensation[87].... The existence of the world of the intellect is the principle of all other beings and their sustainer, active principle, and ultimate goal. Their clear vision is hidden to man because of the excess of their

> manifestation and our veiling from them because of the distraction of material bodies. We can reasonably point to the unity of this world and the simplicity of everything in it and the multiplicity of this world [of physical bodies] in view of the number of individuals. It should be known that the luminous Platonic Forms are substances in themselves and their existence is the source of the substances of this world and their quiddities. They are also the realities of these sensate bodies. *Asfār*, I, 3, pp. 503–504[88]

As a source of meaning and value, the intelligible world signifies plenitude, perfection, actuality, and comprehensiveness. Ṣadrā occasionally uses a language of personal beings to refer to the intelligible world as, for instance, when he says that 'celestial spheres [as the locus of intelligible forms] have noble spirits.'[89] In this sense, Ṣadrā's gradational ontology is founded upon what Leslie calls 'axiarchism,' i.e., the view that the world is grounded in value and that the reality of existence can be explained primarily in valuational terms.[90]

This meeting between the ontological and the axiological is a common theme in Ṣadrā and has important implications for his theory of knowledge. Since existence is intrinsically intelligible and ultimately the source of all cognitive terms, it is only natural that it should be grounded in value. Ṣadrā uses a number of examples to demonstrate the relevance of this premise for his concept of knowledge. One such example he is fond of using is man and his relation to plant and animal kingdoms. As a higher state of existence, 'humanity' contains everything that belongs to the species of plant and animal existence. Vegetation is the most important differentia the plants have. Animals possess the vegetative faculty with a host of other qualities missing in plants such as mobility and sensation. Finally, man contains all of these qualities in addition to speech, intelligence and free will, in which plants and animals lack. To express this higher state of existence, Ṣadrā introduces the concept of ontological simplicity (*basīṭ*). Simplicity denotes a concentrated state of existence whereby a substance contains multiple existential qualities without a break or fissure. Man contains the totality of plant and

animal attributes in a simple manner, and being a simple substance vis-à-vis the lower states below it, man gains a higher ontological status. Ṣadrā's celebrated phrase that 'a simple reality is all things' (*basīṭ al-ḥaqīqah kull al-ashyā'*) expresses this simplicity.[91] Although a general principle meant to apply to all things, the exact meaning of this phrase can be clarified only within the specific context in which it is used. When we apply it to the concept of man, for instance, it signifies that 'man-ness' contains all qualities and properties that belong to 'plant-ness' and 'animal-ness.' Another example is light and its degrees of intensification. A candle light is imperfect compared to moon light and moonlight is imperfect compared to the light of the sun. The sun, the most condensed source of light, is ontologically higher than all other forms of light.

It is not difficult to see the relation between this notion of ontological simplicity and the gradation of existence (*tashkīk al-wujūd*),[92] and Ṣadrā applies it to intelligible substances without any reservations. Like the order of existence, the intelligible world allows gradation in terms of intensification and diminution: an intelligible substance becomes more intense and higher when it contains all intelligible realities under its species. To use our previous example, man contains in himself all levels of intelligibility and meaning available to animal and vegetative states. When we talk about the essence of man-ness or humanity, we do not exclude from it anything that belongs to the definitions of animal-ness and plant-ness. Man-ness as an intelligible form contains all of the lower and imperfect states of meaning 'in a simple manner.' In applying this principle of ontological simplicity to the intelligible world, Ṣadrā simply replaces existence with intellect: 'A simple intellect is all intelligibles' (*'aql basīṭ kull al-ma'qūlāt*).[93] This implies that a simple substance such as man vis-à-vis a tree or horse is more meaning-laden and has a higher level of intelligibility. The noetic superiority of man in intelligibility is not simply a result of his intelligence, in which plants and animals lack. Rather, it is a necessary corollary of the fact that man is more 'beingful' than

others. Here, again, Ṣadrā defines intelligibility in terms of the degrees of existence rather than the knowing subject's mastery of a discourse.

There is another principle that warrants this conclusion. If knowledge is to be universal, as the Peripatetics argue, it has to correspond to a reality of an equal value. In this case, the three modes of perception, accepted unanimously by Muslim philosophers, have to correspond to three different modes of existence. Following Ibn Sīnā, Ṣadrā introduces a tripartite division of existence with three corresponding stages of disembodiment.[94] Sensible forms apply to corporeal bodies in that their disembodiment (*naz'*) from matter is conditioned by such attributes as quantity, change, time, etc. Ṣadrā calls this type of disembodiment 'imperfect and conditioned.' Imaginal forms apply to things that are suspended between matter and intelligibility. Ṣadrā calls their mode of disembodiment 'medial' (*mutawassiṭ*). Finally, intellective forms denote the intelligible reality of things, which are above the limitations of corporeal and imaginal existence. Their mode of disembodiment is called 'perfect' or 'complete' (*tāmm*) because at this level of gradation nothing is left out of the ontological definition of things.[95] When the soul or the intellect in actuality reaches this stage, it becomes ready for even a higher journey to the world of Proximate Angels (*al-malā'ikat al-muqarrabūn*):

> These meanings are such that it is in the nature of the soul to become a knowing intellect through them in an intellective order from the First Principle to the intellects which are the Proximate Angels [that are close to the Divine Throne][96] and to the souls that are the angels after the First and to the heavens and the elements (*al-'anāṣir*)…and the soul becomes knowing and intellecting by being illuminated with the light of the First Intellect. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 362

In an important gloss on the first part of Ibn Sīnā's *Ilāhiyyāt* where Ibn Sīnā discusses the subject matter of metaphysics, Ṣadrā explains the meaning of the 'science of metaphysics' (*'ilm mā ba'd al-ṭabī'ah*) in terms of disembodiment. The ascending

and descending orders of existence and perception confirm the point mentioned above: for any perception to be reliable, it must correspond to a reality of similar value. Sensation corresponds to what is sensible in physical objects. Intellection corresponds to what is intelligible in them. But the way they possess these qualities and the way we come to perceive them are asymmetrical. The first aspect of perceivable things *in themselves* is their intelligibility, i.e., their intelligible form. For us, however, it comes last in the order of perception because the human mind begins with sensible forms and works its way up to the world of the intelligible.

> Things have an existence in themselves and in relation to us. As far as the order of their existence in themselves is concerned, the first is the intelligibles, then imaginable and estimative forms, and then the sensibles. As for the order of their existence in relation to us, the first is the sensibles, then the imaginable and estimative forms, and then the intelligibles. That is why it has been said that 'whoever has lost [his] sense has lost [his] knowledge.'[97] The reason for this is that our existence starts with the sensibles; when our perception of the sensible is completed, we receive from the effusing principle (*al-mabda' al-fayyāḍ*) the lights of life and the powers of the animal soul capable of perceiving imaginative and estimative particulars. When we complete the state of animal [soul] in a gradual manner, we receive the lights of the intellect and the powers of the rational soul capable of perceiving universals and disembodied intellective [forms].
>
> The perceiver cannot be other than the kind of what is perceived. Since the order of man's existence is the opposite of the order of things emanating from the actual reality (*al-ḥaqq al-wāqi'ah*) in the chain of beginning from the principle of existence because in the chain of return he moves towards the utmost reality of existence, then it is not surprising that his knowledge of things is in proportion to his existence. In fact, knowledge of something is nothing but its existence for the knower. It is then natural that for him the existence of sensible and imaginative forms comes before the existence of the intelligibles. That is why his knowledge of these things has been called the 'knowledge of what comes after physics' (*'ilm mā ba'd al-ṭabī'ah*). *Sharḥ ilāhiyyāt*, Vol. I, p. 90

An important conclusion Ṣadrā derives from this view of existence and intelligibility is what he calls the 'penetration of knowledge' (*sirāyat al-'ilm*) in all things including animals, plants and minerals. Just as existence penetrates all things, intelligibility as an epiphenomenon of existence is to be found in things with varying degrees of intensity and reality. Although 'rocks and material bodies' represent the lowest level of existence, they nevertheless partake of intelligibility in some way: 'Knowledge is a single reality. It is necessary in the Necessary Being and contingent in contingent beings in accordance with the reality of existence. As we have pointed out before, the source of knowledge, volition and the like is existence but some people among the intelligent are incapable of understanding the penetration of knowledge, power, and volition in all existents even in rocks and material bodies just like the penetration of existence into them.'[98] The simple intellect (*'aql basīṭ*) is thus closely tied to simple existence. Ṣadrā states this as follows:

> When the soul passes from potentiality to actuality, it becomes a simple intellect, which is all things. This is a matter that has been firmly established in our view. The explanation of this is as follows: knowledge and intellection (*al-ta'aqqul*) are a mode of existence, and existence is united with quiddity. In the same way, knowledge is united with what is known (*al-ma'lūm*). Some beings are low in degree and weak and some lofty and strong. Those that are low [in degree] have very little share in meanings (*ma'āni*) and confined to one single meaning like a single quantity (…) whereas those that are noble [in rank] are the essence of the plenitude of meanings even if they are small in quantity or have no quantity at all like the rational soul. By the same token, knowledge has various kinds some of which are low in degree such as sense-perception [since] it is impossible to sense multiple sensibles through a single sensation. [But] some are higher in rank such as intellection in that a single intellect is sufficient to intellect an infinite number of intelligibles as in the case of the simple intellect. In short, whatever as knowledge has a higher status in existence, it is more capable of [attaining] what can be known (*ma'lūmāt*) and more intense in containing

> quiddities…when we know something through its perfect definition, we know it with its full truth and reality even if we cannot know all of its parts at once due to the impossibility of knowing the very truth and reality of something at once. *Asfār*, I, 3, pp. 377–379

A similar point is made in the following paragraph which concludes with a historical note:

> The realization of this matter [i.e., the unification of the intellect and the intelligible] is not possible except by having recourse to the principles that were mentioned in the beginnings of this book concerning the view that existence is the principal reality in existentiation (*mawjūdiyyah*) and quiddity is derived from it. It is certain that existence allows intensification and diminution, and whatever is strong in existence (*qawiyy al-wujūd*) becomes more inclusive and encompassing of universal meanings and disembodied intellective quiddities. When existence reaches the level of the simple intellect, which is completely disengaged from the world of corporeal bodies and quantities, it becomes all of the *intelligibilia* and all things in a manner more virtuous and nobler than whatever they are based upon. Whoever has not tasted this path cannot understand the simple intellect, which is the source of all detailed knowledge (*al-'ulūm al-tafṣīliyyah*). That is why you see most of the virtuous people finding it very difficult and unable to verify it in spite of their deep involvement in the sciences of wisdom as in the case of Shaykh Suhrawardī in the *Muṭaraḥāt*, *Talwīḥāt*, and *Ḥikmat al-ishrāq* who has clearly rejected this view, and Imām [Fakhr al-Dīn] al-Rāzī and those who enjoy their ranks. *Asfār*, I, 3, pp. 373–374[99]

In the end, Ṣadrā returns to his initial assumption concerning the correlative relationship between the terms of existence and the terms of intelligibility. Since intelligibility corresponds to a particular level of existence, it is no longer conceived to be a property of the mind. We shall return to this issue below when we discuss Ṣadrā's criticism of the previous theories of knowledge. Ṣadrā's radical claim is that intelligibility is constitutive of reality. Intelligible forms are not just conceptual

instruments by which we know the extra-mental world. Rather, they are coterminous with the world and that is why we can conceptually know it. There is a sense in which we can say that without intelligible forms, there would be no such thing as the 'world.' This implies that 'reality' does not precede intelligibility. What we call reality is not an aggregate of objects devoid of intelligibility to which clusters of meaning and signification are attributed *a posteriori*. Ṣadrā uses the example of physical instruments and light to illustrate this point. Intelligible forms, he argues, are not like manual instruments with which we operate but which are dispensable in themselves. Rather, they are like light that makes vision possible:

> One cannot say that these forms are instruments for the soul's intellecting things other than itself. Rather, they are intelligible for the soul by themselves in the sense that whatever corresponds to them outside the soul [i.e., in the extra-mental world] becomes intelligible for the soul through them. Because we say that if these forms were not intelligible for the soul in the first place, they would not be perceived by it. The mediation of these forms in perceiving things is not like the mediation of manual instruments (*ālāh ṣīnā'iyyah*) in carrying out bodily works (*al-a'māl al-badaniyyah*) but rather like the sensate light in perceiving visible things whereby light is seen first and then everything else is seen through it. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 318

b. Four Theories of Knowledge and Their Critique

Ṣadrā launches a relentless attack against the Peripatetics and the Mutakallimūn for failing to see the connection between the ontological and the noetic. While he criticizes the four major theories of knowledge which he attributes to various philosophers and theologians before him, his primary target remains the representational knowledge (*al-'ilm al-irtisāmi*) advanced chiefly by the Muslim Peripatetics. What Ṣadrā finds as most troubling is Ibn Sīnā's definition of knowledge as a negative term and privation on the one hand, and representation, on the other. His

critique of 'abstraction' (*tajarrud*)[100] as privation is based on the application of his gradational ontology to knowledge and intellection (*ta'aqqul*) whereby he asserts the primacy of self-knowledge and what Suhrawardī has called 'knowledge-by-presence' (*al-'ilm al-ḥuḍūrī*). In fact, a good part of Ṣadrā's criticisms rely on knowledge-by-presence and how knowledge as representation and correspondence fails to account for a strongly ontological noetics.

The four theories of knowledge that Ṣadrā criticizes can be summarized as follows. The first is knowledge as abstraction, which turns cognition into a 'negative affair' (*amr salbī*). The second is the representational theory of knowledge which argues for the 'imprinting' of intelligible forms in the mind. According to Ṣadrā, this view, closely related with the first view, turns knowledge into a mental construction and fails to account for its relation with existence. The third theory is the definition of knowledge as a relation (*iḍāfah*) obtaining between subject and object, which Ṣadrā attributes mainly to the Mutakallimūn. The fourth theory defines knowledge as an accident (*'araḍ*) residing in the mind. Of these four theories, Ṣadrā spends the most time with the second one for his primary target remains the Peripatetic concept of knowledge as abstraction. As for Suhrawardī's definition of knowledge as manifestation or appearance (*ẓuhūr*), he accepts it with revisions on the grounds that it reveals an essential aspect of knowledge, which is presence (*ḥuḍūr*).[101]

To begin with the first theory, the Peripatetic concept of 'abstraction' (*tajarrud*) is based on the idea that when intelligible forms are 'disengaged' from their material properties, they are *deprived* of certain qualities and become abstract notions in the mind. For instance, the concept of horse, when abstracted from the actual horse, becomes a mental representation and image, which, in turn, occupies a lesser ontological position compared to the actually existing horse. Ṣadrā takes this to be a minimalist definition of knowledge for this makes intellection a process of privation (*amr salbī*), turning knowledge into something less than the actual object of knowledge (*ma'lūm*). The purpose of

knowledge, however, is to know things *as they are*, i.e., as concrete, unique individual beings with universal meaning-properties.

In contrast to this meaning of 'abstraction' as privation, Ṣadrā defines it as 'disembodiment,' i.e., as a process of existential intensification through the gradation of existence on the one hand, and substantial motion on the other. In this process of elevated disembodiment, intelligible forms become more 'condensed,' viz. able to contain more meanings. When we know something through its intelligible form, our knowledge cannot be less than its actual reality, for it is assumed that the reality of that particular being is contained in its intelligible form *in a simple manner*. Ṣadrā insists that we can know things in and of themselves when we perceive and appropriate their intelligible forms which are more real and concrete than their corporeal existence: 'It is obviously false to define intellection as privation. When we turn to our consciousness in intellecting something, we find out in our consciousness that something has occurred for us, not that something has ceased from us.'[102] In his commentary on the Metaphysics of Ibn Sīnā's *Shifā'*, Ṣadrā restates his position in similar terms: 'When we know something after we did not know it, this must have an effect on our selves. Otherwise our state would remain the same before and during the perception [of something]. This effect is nothing but a matter of existence (*amr wujūdī*). We know through our consciousness that when we know something, some kind of perfection (*amr kamālī*) happens to us, not that something disappears from us.'[103]

There are two primary reasons for Ṣadrā's relentless denial of *tajarrud* as negation and privation. First of all, Ṣadrā defines knowledge in terms of positive ontological qualities. In knowing something, we come to conceive and attain (*idrāk*) a particular aspect of existence. Since existence is the most concrete, perfect and actual of all realities, its perception can only lead to a higher state of consciousness, which, in turn, leaves no space for terms of negation. For Ṣadrā, every act of perception implies moving

a step closer to the reality of the existence of what is perceived provided that it is not obstructed by the presence of such gross qualities as matter, sensation, ignorance, desire or error. In this sense, all veritable perception that yields knowledge is a positive exercise in existence.[104] Secondly, when Ṣadrā criticizes the Peripatetic concept of intellection as privation, he has in mind knowledge-by-presence, which is foundational to Ṣadrā's attempt to define knowledge as arising out of the unification of the intellect and the intelligible.

To exemplify the primacy of this kind of knowledge, Ṣadrā refers to God's knowledge of things and the self-knowledge of human beings. Insofar as God's knowledge is concerned, it can contain no imperfections, potentialities and negations. It is based on existential plenitude, affirmation, and comprehensiveness. The Qur'ānic verse, which Ṣadrā quotes, states that 'nothing escapes His knowledge.' In an important section of *al-Maẓāhir al-ilāhiyyah* titled 'On God's Knowledge of Himself and Other Things,' Ṣadrā equates existence with Light (*al-nūr*) and quotes several verses from the Qur'ān:

> Existence is neither mixed with non-existence nor concealed by cover, veil or obscurity. No darkness veils it. It is thus uncovered by itself, present to and never absent from itself. Its essence is knowledge, knower by itself and known to itself. Therefore existence and Light are one and the same thing: 'God is the Light of the heavens and the earth' (Qur'ān 24:35). It is never veiled except through non-existence and imperfection…. Since the Necessary [Being], exalted be His Name, is above the veil of non-existence, corporeality, composition and potentiality, He is in the highest degree of being a perceiver and perceived and being an intellector and intellected: 'Should He not know—He that created? And He is the One that understands the finest Mysteries (and) is Well-acquainted (with them)' (Qur'ān 67:14).[105] '[Nothing] is hidden from Thy Lord (so much as) the weight of an atom on the earth or in heaven. And not the least and not the greatest of these things but are recorded in an evident book' (Qur'ān 10:61). *al-Maẓāhir al-ilāhiyyah*, pp. 88–89

This emphasis on 'presence' and 'perfection' as a condition of intelligibility is in tandem with the above definition of knowing as a positive exercise in cognition. As for self-knowledge, it is based on the Aristotelian-Suhrawardīan principle that one never ceases to be conscious of oneself.[106] As a first-order state of experience, self-knowledge enjoys permanence and continuity whereas its articulation as a second-order concept leads to representation, which, for Ṣadrā, signifies an epistemic rupture between the subject and its self-consciousness.

In short, Ṣadrā's main concern is to show that in knowing we gain something, and this signifies a process in positive terms whereby we increase in knowledge and appropriate the intelligible reality of what we know. It is true that in abstracting intelligible forms we leave out certain properties that account for the corporeal constitution of things. The concept of hot-ness, for instance, is not itself hot; otherwise we would be hot when we think of it in our minds. This is another way of stating the difference between the concept and reality of things. Ṣadrā, however, insists that the meaning of things contained in their intelligible forms does not diminish in epistemic value. Instead, it becomes more intense by leaving behind such imperfect qualities as materiality, darkness, grossness, etc. It is in this sense that knowledge is 'a matter of affirmation' (*amr thubūtī*). Ṣadrā makes this point clear in his countenance of Suhrawardī's definition of knowledge as clarity and presence.

> As for the *Shaykh al-maqtūl* [Suhrawardī], the author of the *Ḥikmat al-ishrāq*, he argued that knowledge consists of 'appearing' (*ẓuhūr*), and appearing is light itself. But light can be a light for itself or for something else. If it is for itself, then it is perceiving of itself; if it is for something else, then this [light] is either a light for itself or for something other than itself…he thus reasoned that the knowledge of something by itself consists of its being a light for itself and the knowledge of something by something else consists of an illuminative relation between luminous things. At their face value, these views are contradictory but they can be interpreted in such a way as to relegate them to one point of view, and it is the idea that

> knowledge is comprised of the existence of a disembodied thing whereby existence is conditioned by the privation of obscurities whether it is knowledge for itself or for something else. If this disembodied being from which obscurities are removed is existence for itself, then it is an intellect by itself. If it is a being for something else like the accidents, then it is an intellect or an imaginal (*khayāl*) or sensate [form] for something else. *Asfār*, I, 3, pp. 285–286

The representational theory which construes knowledge as mental impression is the basis of what we might call common-sense epistemology. For Ṣadrā, it accounts only for certain types of objects for it is based on subject-object bifurcation. When the mind encounters actually existing objects, it creates images and representations by utilizing universals and generic terms. This, in turn, lands us in the celebrated correspondence theory of truth: true knowledge of things obtains when mental images sustained by the knowing subject corresponds to the objects in the extra-mental world. But this view, which Ṣadrā attributes to Ibn Sīnā in particular, cannot apply to *knowledge of concepts* for concepts are not in the external world in the way physical objects are.[107] Furthermore, the correspondence theory is predicated upon the subject-object dichotomy and cannot explain self-knowledge which transcends the binary opposition of the knowing subject and the object known. Self-consciousness and self-knowledge entail the idea that we operate in a first-order conceptual scheme in which the subject, the *I*, and the attributes predicated of it are one and the same thing. As Wittgenstein would later elaborate, when I say that 'I am in pain,' there is no distinction between the *I* who utters this sentence and the I/person who is in pain.[108] The self-conscious *I* is a unique existent to which universals or generic properties are attributed only antecedently, and the same holds true for self-knowledge.

This is where knowledge as representation fails to explain the essential unity of subject and object in self-knowledge. The following is Ṣadrā's response to knowledge as 'impressions in the mind':

> As for the second school that considers knowledge as consisting of a form impressed (*munṭabiʿah*) upon the intellect, it is to be rejected as well from three points of view.
>
> First of all, if intellection were to consist of the occurrence of a form in the intellector, we would not have intellected our own essences. The conclusion is false as is the premise as necessitated by [our] consciousness. Our self-intellection is either our very essence or [not in which case] another form arises in ourselves from ourselves. Both parts are false…. Secondly, this is necessitated by a single thing's being a substance and an accident because the form of ourselves is like our very selves…. Thirdly, all mental forms are universals even if they are particularized a thousand times, and this does not prevent them from being universals and being shared by multiple subjects. But we know ourselves as a particular identity without the possibility of sharing [it with other subjects]. Whatever is superadded to ourselves, we refer to it as 'it' whereas we refer to ourselves as 'we' ['I']. If our self-knowledge were through a form added to ourselves, we would have referred to ourselves as 'it.' The conclusion is false as is the premise. *Asfār*, I, 3, pp. 288–289

Ṣadrā makes a similar point when he argues against the concept of knowledge as a relation or attribution (*iḍāfah*) between subject and object. Ṣadrā's general principle about relational terms rules out the possibility of defining knowledge as a relation because 'the attributed (*al-muḍāf*) is dependent and not independent. It moves if its subject moves and remains still if its subject remains still. It increases if its subject increases and decreases if its subject decreases. It intensifies if its subject intensifies and diminishes if its subject diminishes.'[109] What this means for knowledge as relation is that we cannot conceive intelligibility without a knower. There must be a knower for anything to be known. At its face value, the proposition seems to make sense. We gain knowledge at the point where the knower meets the object of his knowledge. This is what Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī claims when he defines intellection (*taʿaqqul*) as a relation between a knower and the mental representation of what it knows.[110] A closer look, however, reveals that the proposition is fallacious, for it makes intelligibility dependent on the cognitive act of the knower.

Ṣadrā's working principle is that intelligibility as the proper basis of all meaningful statements has an existence of its own and does not impart any privileged position to the knower. Ṣadrā sees knowledge and intelligibility as interchangeable, and the *content* of what is known precedes the knower. If knowledge and intelligibility can exist only with the knower or when the knower meets the object of his knowledge, this turns all knowledge into a property of the knower or what Ṣadrā calls a 'quality of the soul' (*kayfiyyah nafsāniyyah*). This, in turn, makes knowledge 'a purely mental thing among the category of things known (*ma'lūmāt*). But the knowledge of every category is nothing other than this category without its having an existence in and of itself.'[111]

There are further difficulties with defining knowledge as a relation. Divine knowledge is a case in point. If knowledge were to be a relation, then God's knowledge of things would be an accidental and *a posteriori* state between Him and objects of His knowledge. God's knowledge of contingent beings would be 'a quality superadded to His Essence which subsists as one and is more exalted than having one of His attributes of perfection coming from one of the weakest created [i.e., contingent] beings.' But perhaps the most pernicious result, theologically speaking, is that this view makes God a non-knower before He encounters His objects of knowledge. God's existence precedes all of His other attributes, which means that if knowledge is nothing but a relation between subject and object, then God 'would not be knowing anything before receiving this attribute [of knowledge].' Moreover, this would make God's knowledge dependent upon contingent beings which His very existence creates. This is absurd for 'it is impossible for that which is the source of all perfection for other things to receive perfection from others.'[112] In a similar way, knowledge designates a state of perfection whereby we gain something whereas 'relationality alone is not a quality of perfection for anything.'[113] Lastly, even if we accept knowledge as relation, it does not always depend on the two terms of a relation but requires a third term by which

we judge the relationship between them. Therefore ‘when we judge that the moving body is different from the mover, father from son or an angry person from the person he is angry with, we know all these through a demonstration outside the concepts of the two sides [of attribution].’[114] In other words, a relationship between two things does not always yield knowledge about them.

The following paragraph provides a concise summary of Ṣadrā’s general criticism of knowledge as relation:

> As for the third view that knowledge is a relation between the knower and the known without there being any other state beyond it, it is also false. As it was explained in the section on attribution (*iḍāfah*), the terms of a relation have no independent existence and do not come about except in the case of two relational terms. Furthermore, much of what we perceive does not have concrete existence in the outside world. When we perceive ourselves, there is no attribution between ourselves [that perceives] and ourselves [that is perceived] except from the point of view of mental analysis (*al-i‘tibār*). If the knowledge of ourselves were to consist of an attribution of ourselves to ourselves, our knowledge of ourselves would not be obtained except as mental analysis and comparison. But this is not the case for we are incessantly conscious of ourselves.
> *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 290

It follows then that the knowledge we have of ourselves is not different from ourselves. In self-knowledge, that which knows and that which is known are one and the same. It is true that we can have a *conception* of the self through conceptual analysis. This, however, is only a second-order conceptualization and does not state the actual self which is both the subject and object of self-cognition. Such an analysis does not overcome the subject-object bifurcation for it treats self-knowledge as a kind of object-knowledge. What Ṣadrā wants to affirm is that we cannot objectivize self-knowledge in the way we do the representational knowledge of things that exist in the external world. Ṣadrā generalizes this rule to knowledge as both relation and representation:

> …what needs to be investigated is how something knows itself when we say that perception (*idrāk*) is a relational state (*ḥālah iḍāfiyyah*) or when we say that it consists of the representation of the perceived in the perceiver. If knowledge were to be a relational state, then relation happens between two things whereas one single thing cannot be attributed to itself, in which case it would not know itself. If we say that it consists of representation, a thing is represented for something else, in which case it would not be known to itself. *Asfār*, I, 3, pp. 353–354

In summary, Ṣadrā's overall concern is to formulate a substantive rather than relational concept of knowledge. For an ontologist like Ṣadrā, 'relation' is too weak a term to do justice to knowledge as a mode of existence. That is why he also criticizes the idea of knowledge as an accident (*'araḍ*) on similar grounds. First of all, when we define knowledge as an accident, we define it as an accident *in* the mind. As we said before, this makes knowledge a property of the knower, which Ṣadrā rejects as a subjective view of knowledge. Ṣadrā's insistence on this point stems from the fact that 'the existence of intelligible forms in the mind' is not like 'the existence of accidents in their substratum.'[115] Otherwise, we would have to say that all we perceive is accidents. Or, everything we know becomes an accident when they take on the status of mental existence in which case 'there would be no difference between substance and accident in mental existence; the difference would hold only in external existence.' This, however, does not apply to such things as God, ourselves, actual substances[116] and separate intellects for they cannot be conceived of as accidents. The basic question is then how a substance becomes an accident when it is known in the mind. Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, who remains Ṣadrā's main target here, sees no problem with 'something being an accident from the point of view of its mental existence and a substance from the point of view of its actual essence.'[117] By contrast, Ṣadrā asserts that 'knowledge of substance is substance and knowledge of accident is accident.'[118] What we know as substance in the external world remains a substance in the mind. The only

difference is the new mode of existence that a 'substance-in-the-mind' (*fī'l-dhihn*) assumes.

At this point, it is important to clarify the expressions 'in the external world' (*fī'l-khārij*) and 'in the mind' (*fī'l-dhihn*). In Ṣadrā's vocabulary, neither of these expressions refers to some place 'in which' things reside. Rather they denote different modes of existence. The 'external world' is not a 'place' in which things exist. Otherwise we will have to place this place in another place, and that place in another and so on *ad infinitum*. That is why it is more appropriate to understand *fī'l-khārij* as 'externally' rather than 'in the external world' and *fī'l-dhin* as 'mentally' rather than 'in the mind.' As the following statements show, they refer to different modes and levels of existence.

> What we mean by actual [i.e., external] existence (*al-wujūd al-'aynī*) is that the concomitants (*lawāzim*) of an [actual] essence follow from it. When blackness is found in the external world, its proper nature is to cause absence of sight. The proper effect of hotness is to cause hotness. But when they occur in the soul, these concomitants do not follow from them. We call the former actual [external] existence and the latter mental existence. *Asfār*, 1, 3, p. 312[119]
>
> It is clear that what we mean by 'the external' and in 'the mind' when we say 'this exists in the external world' and 'that exists in the mind' is not one of substratum, place or subject. Instead, the meaning of something existing in the external world is that it has an existence to which effects and states (of existence) occur. Its existing in the mind means the opposite. If existence had no reality except the actualization of a quiddity, then there would remain no difference between the external and the mind. *Mashā'ir*, par. 22, p. 12

What Ṣadrā means by the 'subsistence of a form in the mind' is not that the soul creates the forms themselves. This would make all cognition and knowledge a creation of the mind. Instead, what the soul creates is the *mode of existence* proper to things that exist in the mind.[120] This is borne out by the general principle that what we perceive is not the physical object itself but the form proper to it when the necessary conditions are met. To

quote Ṣadrā, 'what is in the external world has no presence in the perceiver. Instead [perception] takes place through the soul's conceptualization of a form which, when the necessary conditions are actualized, corresponds to what is in the outside world and which exists also in the world of the soul.'[121] As I mentioned in Chapter I, Ṣadrā, following the Peripatetics, admits that we cannot know matter itself, for matter is pure potentiality and can be known only when coupled with a particular form. Since what is intelligible in things is not matter but their form, we can only perceive the forms.[122] This, however, does not mean that when we know something, what we know is only an abstract form, not the thing itself. Such a conclusion would lead us to radical conceptualism and eventually to skepticism whereby our relation with the external world would be confined to the contents of our mind. Ṣadrā refers to this as one of the consequences of Ibn Sīnā's concept of knowledge according to which 'the knower, whether a soul, an intellect or God, can intellect only itself or a property of itself.'[123] Instead, Ṣadrā insists that even though we know things through their form or a particular form 'representing' (*mumaththilah*) the actual beings in the extra-mental world, what we know is not an abstract notion but a particular being with existential qualities. Ṣadrā compares the function of these forms to the perception of colors as follows: 'The relation of colours in the external world to the eye is like the relation of quiddities in the external world to their intellective forms.'[124] In other words, what we know is not a mere concept but the thing itself for its form is its very reality. When I perceive a mountain, the mountain as a physical being is not transplanted into my mind. Yet, what I know as the mountain is no less than the reality of the mountain.[125]

Ṣadrā is rather relentless in reiterating this point. In his commentary on the Metaphysics of the *Shifā'*, he says that 'the retention of essences is as follows: when the mind conceptualizes something, it looks at this mental form not from the point of view of its mental determination (*ta'ayyun*) but from the point of view of its external existence by which the category to which

it belongs is particularized such as its being a substance, a corporeal body and a sleeping being and through which the concomitants of its actual reality are predicated of it.'[126] This suggests that the fundamental nature of things is retained by their 'essence' even when they are conceived in the mind as abstract and general notions. The essence of a substance does not change when it is transferred to the mind: a father is a father, i.e., the father of a son, both in the external world and in the mind. The physical properties of a magnet are not transferred to the mind. But its essence, i.e., that metal object that attracts other metal objects, remains the same in the mind. Even if the magnet is in one's pocket and thus prevented from attracting things, i.e., performing its essential function in the external world, it is still a magnet. It is then concluded that 'the intellective forms of substances that exist externally are the very meanings of these beings and their essence.'[127]

It must be clear by now why we cannot claim to create the form, i.e., the essence and meaning of the horse that we see in the field. For Ṣadrā and for all Platonists before him, the intelligible form of the horse exists independent of our perception of it. Otherwise, we cannot explain the meaning of abstracting intelligible forms from sensible, i.e., physical objects. In this limited sense, even the Peripatetic tradition accepts the independent existence of intelligible forms. The mind knows things by *extracting* their intelligible forms *from* their matter. That is why Ṣadrā's choice of the word 'subsistence' is by no means fortuitous: subsistence denotes the mode of existence of physical objects in the mind, not their generation by it. It is also here that the analogy of light comes in handy: just as light makes vision possible, intelligible forms make cognition possible. In Ṣadrā's words, '[intelligible forms] are in fact the dawning of an intellective light on the soul by which the essences are seen just like the dawning of sunlight on the faculty of sight by which visible things are seen.'[128]

This brings us to an aspect of Ṣadrā's concept of the soul that needs to be understood properly. In a broad sense, the soul *is* the

ideas it contains. It is not the case that the soul is an essence on the one hand, and the concepts and ideas it embodies are separate beings on the other. 'The soul by its essence consists of its perceptual cognitions (*mashā'ir idrākiyyah*).'[129] The soul's intellecting of other things and 'its being intelligible to itself is the same thing as its own very existence.'[130] In Ṣadrā's words, 'when the soul perceives sensible and imaginal [substances], it intellects[131] the forms that subsist with it. But this is like the subsistence of a passive agent with an active agent, not like the subsistence of an accident in a subject. In this regard, what is established in the mind is that very thing which subsists with it, not that they are two separate things in essence.'[132] Ṣadrā insists that the 'subsistence of sensible and imaginal forms in the soul is not through incarnation (*ḥulūl*).'[133] It is more appropriate to say that perception takes place not through the 'incarnation of an intelligible form in the soul but through archetypes (*muthul*) that reside in the mind and through the soul's unification with them.'[134]

Coming back to his criticism of knowledge as relation, Ṣadrā makes a distinction between two kinds of relation. The first is the relation that obtains both in the external world and in the mind, an example of which is the relation between father and son. The second is the relation that obtains in the mind but not in the external world. The distinction between essence and existence is a relation of this kind. There is a third kind where no distinction occurs either in the mind or in the external world, and this is what Ṣadrā seeks to present as yet another argument against knowledge as relation.

> Knowledge consists of the existence of an actual thing for something else. We further say that it is the existence of something disengaged from matter whether this existence belongs to itself or to something else. If it is for something else, then it is knowledge for something other than itself; if it is not for something else, then it is knowledge for itself. This is what we call relation (*iḍāfah*) like the relation of existence. Existence in and of itself can be an existent for itself or for something else. The latter is like the existence of accidents

> *vis-à-vis* their subjects and the former like the existence of substances. The existence of [those substances] is unchanging for themselves but not for other things. The relation between existence and quiddity, however, is only metaphorical and as such there is no differentiation between the two except by way of mental analysis. Therefore if the relation in question necessitates the differentiation of two sides, it necessitates it in terms of actualization (*taḥaqquq*) in the external world. If relation occurs in the extra-mental world as in the case of father-son and writer-writing, the differentiation [between them] comes about in the external world. It is thus impossible for father and son, who is related to that father, to be one single existent. But when the relation takes place only in the mind without being in the external world, then the differentiation of the two sides takes place also only within the context of this relation (*nisbah*). *Asfār*, I, 3, pp. 354–355

In contrast to these kinds of relations, however, there is another kind of relation that does not presume duality in existence *in concreto* or in the mind. Ṣadrā's working principle is that one single existent can be the subject of multiple meanings without there being the duality or multiplicity of attribution and predication. A frequently used example is man having the attributes of vitality/animal-ness (*ḥayawān*) and speech/ rationality (*nuṭq*) at the same time. When we define man as rational animal, we do not refer to three discrete things called 'man,' 'rational,' and 'animal.' As a whole, they give us the concept of 'man.' Insofar as the actual reality of man is concerned, there is again no separation between 'man,' 'rational' and 'animal.' What we have before us is a single unit. That is why Ṣadrā insists that when we talk about ourselves as knowing and known on the one hand, and as the locus of knowledge on the other, this does not lead to 'multiplicity in reality or in mental analysis.'[135]

According to this line of argument, the ability to intellect and, by extension, intelligibility is the standing condition of agency, for we cannot conceive the human agent without affirming of him the qualities of speech and intelligence. When applied to knowledge, this implies that a thing that exists is intelligible and

can be known by itself in proportion to its share of existing: 'Knowledge is neither a negative thing like abstraction from matter nor a relation. Rather, it is existence. Not every kind of existence but actual, not potential existence. Not every kind of actual existence but existence pure and unmixed with non-existence. It becomes more intense in knowledge [i.e., intelligibility] in proportion to its level of purity from the blemish of non-existence.'[136] In such cases, there is no relationality between a thing and its intelligibility. In the case of God, knowledge is necessitated by His very existence, which is simple (*basīṭ*), for existence by definition implies consciousness and is the proper locus of intelligibility. As a general rule, one cannot speak of the plenitude of existence without acknowledging its cognitive content. To drive this point home, Ṣadrā returns to the question of how multiple meanings are predicated of God without jeopardizing His absolute unity:

> When the Sublime, exalted be His Invocation, is qualified as existing by Himself and subsisting and knowing through His own essence or when we say that He has Power, Will or Life, there is in reality no relation, attribution, connection, accidentality or any kind of attribution and relation but only a pure existence which is itself the locus of knowledge, power, volition, life, and other qualities of perfection.[137] Just as His existentiality (*mawjūdiyyah*) does not necessitate in Him an attribute and a subject of attribution (*mawṣūf*), He has in reality no accident, subject of accident and thus no accidentality either in concrete reality or in the mind. The same applies to other names whose judgment is the same as existence because they are nothing but existence. But the mind presumes here an attribute, a subject of attribution, and a relation between the two. Thus we say [falsely] that He the exalted has Being, Knowledge, and Will…. This relation between Him the Exalted and His essence is what the mind extrapolates by way of comparison with what it sees in things other than the Divine…the relation here is only metaphorical, and it goes back to the absence of attributing composition and multiplicity to Him. *Asfār*, I, 3, pp. 355–356

We can paraphrase Ṣadrā's point as follows: in cases where a single being assumes multiple meanings, relation is a mental concept. The mind conceives a set of relations between a being and its various attributes but in reality what we have is a single unitary being. This is most obvious in the case of self-knowledge. It is true that I can establish a relation between myself and *my knowledge* of myself when I retroactively think upon the proposition that 'I know myself.' This relation, however, ought to be mental otherwise I would have to say I have a relation between myself and myself. Occasionally, Ṣadrā compares this to the distinction between essence and existence. The distinction is purely mental and does not correspond to anything real in the external world. What really exists is a single being with multiple meanings and attributes. It is in this sense that 'relation is only a metaphor.'

This conclusion is also warranted by Ṣadrā's general principle that perfect disembodiment and, by extension, pure intelligibility enable higher beings to take on multiple attributes and 'meanings.' It goes without saying that the word 'meaning' (*ma'nā*) is to be understood here in the light of Ṣadrā's realist ontology of Platonic Forms. When such beings reach higher levels of disembodiment through gradation of existence and substantial motion, they increase in existence rather than simply having more accidents added to them. This, in turn, reduces all dualities and relations to mental distinctions. The duality of name and the named, for instance, takes place only for those beings that remain attached to material existence and thus lack in complete transparency and luminosity. Such dualities disappear as beings become ontologically simpler and more condensed. Qualities such as knowledge, intelligibility, life, volition, and so on are constitutive of simple substances, not mere attributes residing in them.

> In our view, knowledge is existence that is disengaged from matter. As this being exists by itself, it is also intelligible by itself. Just as the existentiality (*mawjūdiyyah*) of existence by itself does not

> require duality either in essence or in the consideration of essence except only as pure mental analysis, by the same token its intelligibility by itself does not lead to differentiation in its essence, aspects (*jihāt*) or considerations except as difference in concept [i. e., in the mind]. As you have seen before, different concepts can unite in one being and reality, and a being that is one and simple without any obscurities can rightly be the locus of multiple concepts all of which are united in existence despite the fact that they may exist in different loci with multiple beings *in concreto* or with different concepts in the mind. Since a disembodied and simple essence is disengaged from being the locus [of one single attribute], the concept of substance is affirmed of it. Since it is a form disengaged from matter, the concept of the intellect is affirmed of it; since it is a form by itself, the concept of the intelligible is affirmed of it; since it is existent by itself and not by something else, the concept of the intellector (*'āqil*) is affirmed of it; since it is a being beyond all evils, it becomes the subject of love; since it perceives this goodness, it loves its own essence, and so on. In this way, it is possible to affirm these relational meanings of one single essence without there being multiplicity and difference in actual reality except in concepts. *Asfār*, I, 3, pp. 356–357

The gist of Ṣadrā's above criticisms is that knowledge should be conceived as a substantive rather than an instrumental and relational term. For Ṣadrā, the definitions of knowledge as abstraction, impression, relation and accident all fall short of the substantive nature of cognition and intelligibility.

c. Modes of Perception and the Simple Intellect

Following the Peripatetic tradition,[138] Ṣadrā divides perception (*idrāk*) into four modes as sensation (*iḥsās*), imagination (*takhayyul*), estimation (*tawahhum*) and intellection (*ta'aqqul*). Each of these modes corresponds to a level of existence or, more properly, to a level of disembodiment. Ṣadrā works from these levels of existence toward the mind rather than moving from the mind to how it perceives things as mental representations. The four modes of disembodiment denote both the types and

levels of perception. We can hardly overemphasize the significance of this point because for Ṣadrā our epistemic contact with things is mediated through a hierarchy of perception: in its cogitations, the mind knows things in stages and degrees rather than simply in different ways and through different means.[139] This hierarchy is essentially ontological as each level of perception corresponds to a particular mode of existence. In defining perception as an onto-epistemic encounter with things, Ṣadrā's intent remains thoroughly ontological: instead of construing perception as a state pertaining to the knower, he places it within the larger context of ontological disembodiment (*tajrīd* and *naz'*), luminosity, and clarity (*wuḍūh*), and situates perception 'somewhere' between the mental plane of the knowing subject and the non-subjective domain of existence. This is a decisive move away from a subjectivist-psychological notion of perception to a mainly ontological context in which the knowing subject, i.e., the 'intellector' (*'āqil*) is no longer seen as the sole locus of perception.

With this point in mind, we can now turn to how these modes of perception function in Ṣadrā's epistemology. The first kind is called sensation and acquired through the medium of the five senses. In discussing sensation, Ṣadrā focuses not so much on the senses as on the kind of disembodiment that makes sense experience possible. Sensation is the perception of existence as 'mixed with matter' and conditioned by such determinants as place, time, position, quality, and quantity.[140] Since sensate objects are conditioned by these material qualities without which they cannot exist, their disembodiment and, by extension, perception is 'incomplete.' In this sense, the senses are necessary but not sufficient for arriving at the form, i.e., the meaning of sensate qualities.

Imagination (*takhayyul*) corresponds to a higher level of perception despite the fact that it shares similar characteristics with sensation.[141] The difference between the two lies in the fact that the imaginal faculty can retain forms or ideas in the absence of a sensate object without being able to generate universal

concepts apart from sensate objects and qualities.[142] When perceiving heat as a property of corporeal beings, for instance, sensation remains completely dependent on the hot object whereas imagination can preserve the concept of heat after having a first experience of the hot object perceived. In this sense, imagination acts as an intermediary and isthmus (*barzakh*) between the purely material and purely intellective, and Ṣadrā, following Ibn al-'Arabī, uses imagination as an ontological state connecting the two spheres of existence.[143]

Estimation (*tawahhum*) refers yet to a higher level of perception whereby the estimative faculty (*quwwah wahmiyyah*) can sustain forms as ideas and notions in the absence of sense experience and sensate objects. But it falls short of constructing these forms as universal qualities applicable to multiple objects. Since the estimative faculty perceives meanings only in relation to particular sensate objects, it represents a lower level of the intellective faculty. At the end, however, Ṣadrā drops estimation from his list of the modes of perception by saying that the 'estimative faculty is like an intellect that has fallen from its [higher] state.'[144]

Intellection (*ta'aqqul*) is the highest mode of perception whereby a 'thing is perceived from the point of view of its essence only and not from the standpoint of any other [consideration] whether taken by itself or by other perceptual attributes.'[145] Intellection pertains to the essences of things which contain in themselves all other sensate and perceptual qualities 'in a simple manner.' This is how the intellect is able to retain meanings and concepts in the absence of sensate objects to which such meanings are applied. As a condition of intelligibility, disembodiment reaches its highest level of intensity and incorporeality in intellection. This is the way of looking at things 'as they are' or as 'things-qua-essences' (*min ḥayth māhiyyāt*). At this juncture, knowing things through their essences reverses the process of representational knowledge: instead of abstracting forms/meanings inherent in things in an ascending order, the intellect knows them by uniting with their intelligible essences

in a descending order. Obviously, this does not suggest anything like 'knowing things without things.' Rather, it refers to perceiving things through their essential properties stored in their intelligible forms which enjoy a higher ontological status than sensate qualities.

Thus Ṣadrā reduces perception to three modes and classifies them according to their level of disembodiment and ontological intensity. In essence, this is a restatement of Ibn Sīnā, to which Ṣadrā adds very little. His attempt to collapse all modes of perception into modes of existence, however, is no small matter:

> In fact, perception is of three kinds as there are three worlds [viz., the sensible, the imaginal, and the intellectual], and estimation is like an intellect that has fallen from its [higher] state. In every perception, there is a disengagement (*naz'*) of the realities of things and their spirits from the moulds of physical existence and temples of matter. The sensible form is disengaged from matter only imperfectly, being conditioned by the presence of matter. The imaginal form is disengaged medially, and that is why it falls between the world of the *sensibilia* and the world of the *intelligibilia*. The intellective form is disengaged completely in the case of forms that are taken [i.e., disengaged] from matter. As for that which is an intellect by itself, it does not need any of these disengagements in its intellection. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 362[146]

In its act of intellection, the soul does not simply abstract and discard certain qualities from sensate objects. Rather, it undergoes an intellective transformation and becomes 'more' in existential attributes through substantial motion. The soul's intellectual and existential journey is predicated upon Ṣadrā's view that the 'soul is corporeal in its origination but spiritual in its subsistence' (*jismāniyyat al-ḥudūth rūḥāniyyat al-baqā'*). To clarify this point, he returns to his view of disembodiment discussed above. He states that the

> meaning of disengagement (*tajrīd*) in intellection and other kinds of perception is not like the common view of jettisoning certain

> additional qualities (*zawā'id*). It is not the case that the soul remains stationary[147] and the perceptuals are transported from their material positions to the senses, from the senses to the imaginal faculty, and from the imaginal faculty to the intellect. Rather, both the perceiver and the perceived are disengaged together, pass from one being to another together, and travel from one mode of existence to another and from one world to another until the soul becomes an intellect, intellector, and intelligible in actuality after having been only potential in all of them. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 366

By reaching a level of disengagement proportionate to its ontological state, the intellect, once a potential agent of knowing, becomes fully actualized and is called the 'simple intellect' (*al-'aql al-basīṭ*). The simple intellect is preceded by several other intellects or levels of intellection, which Ṣadrā divides into three. The first is the domain of the potential or hylic intellect (*al-'aql al-hayūlānī*) whereby the intellect remains a dormant potentiality until it is united with an intelligible.[148] Like the Peripatetics, Ṣadrā postulates that the potential intellect needs an external agent to actualize it. This agent is the intelligible (*al-ma'qūl*) that is fully actual and intelligible regardless of the presence or absence of an intellect that perceives it. Since an intelligible is essentially a disembodied substance, it is also self-intellecting, and this, in tandem with the Platonic ontology of ideas, makes *intelligibilia* independent of the knowing subject.

The second level of intellection pertains to the imaginal world whereby the disembodied forms of things become established in the faculty of imagination in such a way that 'as if it looks at the forms in a detailed manner [i.e., knows them in full detail].'[149] The third and highest level of intellection obtains when the potential intellect becomes a simple intellect in which the *intelligibilia* are established as 'meaning properties' that are fully actualized. In principle, the simple intellect can conceive ideas and concepts without further analysis and investigation of specific instances. This is what Ibn Sīnā calls 'knowledge in detail' (*al-'ilm bi'l-tafṣīl*) as opposed to 'knowledge in summary' (*al-'ilm bi'l-ijmāl*). The latter form of knowledge requires further

articulation and is usually brought to its full extent in a dialogue. According to Ibn Sīnā, we know many things but only in a cursory manner. Our cognition reaches the level of the simple knowledge (*al-'ilm al-basīṭ*) when we further articulate our conceptions through questioning and deliberation. Suhrawardī joins Ibn Sīnā in drawing a distinction between the two forms of knowledge and states that when we think of the concept of humanity (*al-insāniyyah*), we think of all of its conceptual concomitants (*lawāzim*). In other words, we do not exercise an additional second-order analysis to perceive the full extent of the concept of humanity.[150] This explains the possibility of knowing many things through a single mind or intellect. Continuing this discussion, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī interprets the simple intellect as perspicacity and 'quick wit,' viz., the intellect's ability to know things all 'at once' (*daf'ah wāḥidah*) whereas 'intellection in detail' (*al-ta'aqqul al-tafṣīlī*) refers to the gradual cognition of things 'one after another' (*wāḥidah ba'd wāḥidah*).[151]

For Ṣadrā, the simple intellect represents full actuality and functions in a way similar to the active intellect. Ṣadrā, however, does not say in any clear manner if his simple intellect is a cognitive counterpart of the active intellect in the soul. Instead, he criticizes Ibn Sīnā for failing to see the connection between the simple intellect and the unification argument:

> Proving this simple intellect is not possible except by having recourse to the idea of the unification of the intellect and the intelligibles as we have demonstrated before. What is strange is that the Master [Ibn Sīnā] should grant these matters that he mentions in this context and then be extremely stubborn in denying the idea of unification. If we do not acknowledge the existence of the simple intellect in man and in substances completely disengaged from corporeal bodies and matter in which there are intelligible meanings (*al-ma'ānī al-ma'qūlah*), how can that which is not actualized emanate upon the souls from the simple intellect? How can it bring the souls from potentiality to actuality by virtue of something that is not established in it [i.e., when it does not function as a fully realized agent]? By the same token, how can the forms of the *intelligibilia* be stored in it despite its simplicity while the soul,

> having forgotten them, can find them stored in the simple intellect when it returns to its store of the intelligibles (*khazānat al-'aqliyyah*) just like the Master has demonstrated? *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 372

Simple intellect as the storehouse of intelligible forms is a logical result of the 'perfect disembodiment' of higher intellective beings because the simple intellect stands for the highest rung of intellection at which level one can know things in their 'totality.' In contrast to sense experience where one's access to physical objects is conditioned by the available sense data and hence limited to particular instances of sensate objects, the simple intellect signifies intellectual cognition that comprises *in principle* everything there is to know about perceivable objects. When knowing the 'concept' of humanity, for instance, the simple intellect can know what it means to be human and all of the modes and secondary properties that belong to it. The mind as simple intellect can have such a perfect and complete perception without having to run through the entire spectrum of individual human beings, for to know something *in a simple manner* is to unite with its intelligible essence. Needless to say, one can grant this conclusion only if one accepts Ṣadrā's initial assumptions about existence and its gradation. We are once again reminded that the intelligible reality of things is ontologically more real and epistemologically more reliable than their corporeal templates, and this applies *mutatis mutandis* to the simple intellect that yields 'simple knowledge.'

Ṣadrā assigns to 'simple intellection' such an importance that he presents it as the only proper way of knowing God. Since God is the ultimate source of all existence, the perception of even sensate beings ends up being a perception of an aspect of the Necessary Being. To avoid the seemingly inescapable conclusion that all cognition leads to knowledge of God, Ṣadrā first makes a distinction between simple and composite knowledge:

> Know that knowledge, just like ignorance, can be simple, and it consists of the perception of something without the awareness of this perception and without the affirmation of what is being

> perceived. Or it can be composite and it consists of the perception of something with the awareness of this perception and the awareness of what is being perceived. Once you understand this, we add that the perception of the Real the Exalted One is based on this kind of simplicity and it obtains for everyone in the root of his innate nature (*fiṭrah*). This is so because what is perceived by itself in everything [we know]…is nothing but a mode of the existence of this thing whether this perception is sensual, imaginal, or rational, and whether it is by presence (*ḥuḍūr*) or by coming-into-being (*ḥuṣūl*). *Asfār*, I, 1, p. 116

After this prelude, Ṣadrā turns to his main argument to subsume all cognitive acts under the perception of existence. Ultimately, 'all perception is through a mode of existence higher and more luminous than the [level of] existence clouded with non-existence and material darkness.'[152] This innate and intuitive perception of existence is found in all human beings whether they are aware of it or not.

> According to the verifiers (*muḥaqqiqīn*) among the sages (*'urafā'*) and the theosophers (*muta'allihīn*) among the philosophers (*ḥukamā'*), it is clear and firmly established that the existence of everything is nothing but the reality of its identity (*huwiyyah*), which is related to the existence of the Real and Self-Subsisting One and which is the basis of judgment for the being-ness (*mawjūdiyyah*) of things. The most appropriate way to describe this is to say that [their existence] is a mode of their actual identity, which is related to the Divine Existence. We will establish further proofs for the fact that existential identities are among the degrees of the manifestation of His Essence and rays of His Majesty and Beauty.
>
> The perception of everything is therefore nothing but a consideration (*mulāḥaẓah*) of this thing in a way that is related to the Necessary [Being] from this point of view, i.e., the fact that [the Necessary Being] is its existence (*wujūd*) and being-ness (*mawjūdiyyah*). And this is not possible without perceiving the essence of the Real One the Exalted…. Whoever perceives anything in any mode of perception, he has perceived the Creator. People may be ignorant of this perception except for the elect (*al-khawāṣṣ*) from among the Friends of God the Exalted as it was reported from the

> Commander of the Believers ['Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib] who said: 'I have seen nothing but God before it, after it, with it, and in it.' All of these [perceptions] are correct. It is thus obvious that this simple perception of the Real One the Exalted obtains for every one of His servants. But this does not lead to the perception of God with all of His Essence because this is impossible as it was proved before. *Asfār*, I, 1, pp. 116–117

While simple knowledge or perception is a first-order experience given to us in our 'natural' encounter with things, composite perception requires a second-order conceptualization whereby we reflect upon perception itself.

> As for composite perception, it does not arise for everyone whether it is based on unveiling (*kashf*) or witnessing (*shuhūd*) in the case of the elect of the Friends of God and the sages or whether it is based on demonstrative knowledge as it obtains for intelligent thinkers concerning His Qualities and Effects. Furthermore, this is the place of responsibility (*taklīf*) and message (*risālah*) in which both error and truth have their way, to which the judgment of thought and faith return, and where there is a hierarchy of virtuosity among the sages and degrees among the people. This is in contrast to the former mode [of perception] in which there is no room whatsoever for error and ignorance. As it is said in Persian:
>
> > Knowing the Truth itself is innate (*fiṭrī*)
> > The knowledge of this knowing is but a thought
>
> It is therefore clear that the five perceptions (i.e., the five senses) just like the other kinds of perceptual powers manifest the Divine Identity, which is the First Beloved and the Perfect Goal of man. *Asfār*, I, 1, p. 118

While the three modes of perception are interrelated in a hierarchical way, all perception takes place ultimately through the soul as the simple intellect. The senses function primarily as 'preparatory conditions' for the soul's reception of sensate objects because the senses cannot 'know' by themselves what they perceive. Sense-perception is governed by the intellect in

that what enables the mind to perceive a sensation as a meaningful experience is not the senses but the intellect: 'The senses or the sensate soul as sensate soul cannot know if the sensible object has an existence of its own in the external world. This can be known only through experience and it belongs to the intellect or the thinking soul and not to the faculty of sensation or imagination [to make this judgment].'[153] Conversely, what prevents the soul as a simple intellect from perceiving intelligible essences on a continuous basis or 'all at once' is the intervention of sensible and imaginal faculties and, by derivation, their corresponding levels of existence. The faculty of imagination, for instance, acts as an intermediary between the sensible and the intelligible and cannot sustain incorporeal forms at the same level as the intellect. But since the intellect belongs essentially to the world of the *intelligibilia*, it is capable of making multiple meanings present (*istiḥḍār*) all at once. As the saying goes, 'it is in the nature of the intellect to make many one (*tawḥīd al-kathīr*) and of the senses [to make] one many (*takthīr al-wāḥid*).'[154]

At this point, the question is how the soul as a single substance can know an infinite number of things. We can anticipate that the answer will be to say that the intellect is an incorporeal disembodied substance, contains multiple meanings, and thus can know many things. Ṣadrā, however, goes further and creates an isomorphic relation between the intellect and the intelligible world—a conclusion that has deep repercussions for his cosmology. Stated briefly, this isomorphic relation suggests that the *anthropos* that knows and the *cosmos* that is known share the same domain of reality. In a sense, this is what Aristotle had in mind when he said that 'only the like can know the like.'[155] The soul or the simple intellect remains a single and unitary substance (*jawhar basīṭ*) in knowing various things, and multiplicity in intellection is attributed to such 'epistemic tools' as sensation and imagination. This leads Ṣadrā once more to assert the definition of knowledge as presence and unveiling:

> The soul that knows a multitude of things through intellectual realization and disembodiment from the garment of being human does not become destitute of their knowledge but rather more [intense] as unveiling and clearing (*wuḍūḥ*). In spite of this, when the soul goes above the differences of time and space, its knowledge of things becomes present in it completely all at once as in the case of the knowledge of separate substances whose knowledge [of things] is fully present in them in actuality without the obscurity of potentiality. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 379

The argument for the simplicity of the soul brings us to an important aspect of Ṣadrā's epistemology. We can call this the particularity of first-order perceptions. We have already stated that disembodiment as a condition of intelligibility does not make knowledge an abstract concept but rather establishes it as a concrete state of consciousness due to its higher level of ontological intensity. In this sense, knowledge, like existence, is a 'particular and simple identity' (*huwiyyah shakhṣiyyah basīṭah*) despite the fact that the mind at the level of second-order analysis considers all knowledge under the rubric of universals (*kulliyyāt*). Our 'ordinary' encounter with the world is given in first-order experiences. The second-order analyses of universals enter the picture through a process of self-reflection. In perceiving the tree in front of me, for instance, my knowledge-experience is a direct act of 'seeing,' which involves an intuition of some kind and which is not predicated upon such universals as species, genus and difference. It is only at the level of second-order conceptualization that we talk about intelligible realities as abstractions, concepts and notions. This is also what is meant by the presence of something to itself and to other things: 'presence' (*ḥuḍūr*) implies something concrete and particular.

We can contrast this view of knowledge with the Aristotelian idea that true knowledge is characterized by its generality and universality.[156] For Aristotle and his Muslim followers, a scientific proposition is important and useful not because it corresponds to a particular sensory object but because it makes a general claim about the class to which this particular object

belongs.[157] That is partly why the Peripatetics insist on 'abstraction' as the standing condition of knowledge for this is the only way we can arrive at universal and general propositions. Logic and metaphysics supply us with this sort of knowledge, and we need both to be able to go beyond the particular sensory entities that make up the physical world. As Ibn Sīnā asserts, the discrete and piecemeal descriptions of physical entities does not give us the 'world' because 'all perception is particular' and possible 'by means of a corporeal instrument.'[158]

Ṣadrā does not deny 'abstract' and general knowledge as part of our knowledge about the world. But he insists that this concept of knowledge misses a substantial aspect of what it means to know. In knowing a thing, we have the direct experience of something concrete, particular and specific. Our 'ordinary' or natural encounter with the world, including our own selves, is not mediated through second-order concepts but given in first-order experiences. It then follows that our most intimate and primary standing toward the world remains particular and specific. It is only at the level of second-order conceptualization that we talk about intelligible realities as abstractions, concepts, meanings, notions, universals. Ṣadrā uses the language of presence (*ḥuḍūr*) to state this point: when something is defined as 'present,' it refers to something concrete and particular.

To emphasize the immediacy and self-evidentiality of perception, Ṣadrā adopts Suhrawardī's language of illumination and uses the words 'vision' (*ibṣār*) and 'witnessing' (*mushāhadah*) to describe the particularity of knowledge-experience.[159] Suhrawardī says that 'perception takes place only when the soul has a [concrete] vision [of something] and vision is through a particular form, not through a universal. It then follows that the soul has an illuminative and presential knowledge not mediated through a [representational] form.'[160] Ṣadrā complements Suhrawardī's point by saying that 'perception is nothing more than the soul's attention to and witnessing of that which is perceived. Witnessing takes place not through a universal but a particular form. Therefore the soul by necessity has an

illuminative and presential knowledge and not a form superadded to it [antecedently].'[161] What Ṣadrā seeks to do here is to establish intellection in terms that we would normally attribute to sense-experience without the limitations of corporeal existence. His main concern is to construe intellection as a unique, simple and particular encounter with things in a manner as concrete and real as sense-perception. He says that

> …knowledge, as we have explained before, is non-material existence, and existence in itself is not a universal nature belonging to a particular genus or species even if it is divided into species through the differentia or into individuals through individual properties or into classes through accidental conditions. Every knowledge is a particular and simple identity not to be grouped under a universal meaning [i.e., concept] that belongs to an essence.
> *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 382

This leads us to another premise of the Sadrean noetics: universality and concreteness do not contradict one another. The perception of completely disembodied substances is a prime example of how something can be both concrete and universal at the same time. Speaking of the relationship between the human intellect and the world of the spirit, Ṣadrā defines all cognition in terms of the soul's participation in the spiritual world of actual beings whose reality makes them both concrete and universal at the same time: '…a concept (*al-mafhūm*) is a name for particular things whereas this active principle [of knowledge] (*al-mabda' al-fā'ilī*) has a reality by itself, and is its carrier and protector. By the same token, the universal natures are names for luminous essences (*dhawāt nūriyyah*), intellective identities (*huwiyyah 'aqliyyah*), sacred angels, and the lords of the species of nature (*arbāb anwā' ṭabī'iyyah*).'[162]

Ṣadrā's implicit argument here is that all perception is *ultimately* a concrete and first-order experience whether it is based on sensation or intellection. That is why he sees 'no difference between intellective particularization (*al-tashakhkhuṣ*

al-'aqlī) and universality and participation (*ishtirāk*) among many individuals.'[163]

d. Active Intellect, Intuition, and Peripatetic Intellectualism

Ṣadrā's discussion of the active intellect is largely based on the views of al-Kindī, al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā. Although he offers some new perspectives and revises parts of the Peripatetic view, he remains by and large loyal to the traditional four-fold division of the intellect into potential (*bi'l-quwwah*), actual (*bi'l-fi'l*), acquired (*al-mustafād*) and active (*fa''āl*). There are, however, two important novelties in Ṣadrā. First of all, he discusses the so-called psychological intellects of the Peripatetics as stages of uncovering the modes of existence. Instead of simply abstracting intelligible forms from things *in concreto* and constructing mental images through them, the intellect is now placed in a position to reach out to the intelligible world and unite with it in a way that leaves no epistemological rupture between the intellect and the intelligible. This takes place through what we might call 'appropriation' and 'participation.' Secondly, Ṣadrā assigns a less prominent role to the active intellect in the process of intellection. Even though he accepts the conventional definition of the active intellect as an agent source of human thought, the active intellect becomes somewhat sidelined in view of his concern to construct knowledge as a mode and direct witnessing of existence. This second point is also supported by Ṣadrā's implicit rejection of emanation (*ṣudūr*) as a principle of creation and cosmology.

Since I have already discussed the four types of the intellect in Chapter I, I shall focus here on the revisions Ṣadrā makes to dovetail the traditional four-fold division with his concept of knowledge. As a general rule, Ṣadrā's hermeneutic strategy is not so much to reject the Peripatetics *in toto* as to show that they eventually concur with the unification argument.[164] When the soul passes from potentiality to actuality, Ṣadrā argues, it undergoes an existential transformation and becomes 'more

intense' and 'powerful' in receiving meanings (*ma'ānī*). This is due to the intellect's being subject to gradation which 'enables an individual substance to move from its species to another [i. e., higher] species in a gradual and continuous manner as we see in the case of the intensification of blackness and hotness.'[165] Here Ṣadrā differs from his Peripatetic predecessors when he insists that the soul-intellect does not remain unchanged in the process of intellection. It becomes more intense, i.e., assumes a higher mode of being and becomes more capable of receiving new meanings. Furthermore, the soul, having gone through the gradual stages of intensity, becomes a 'simple intellect' and develops an innate capacity to know all things in a 'simple manner.' What makes the soul an agent of knowledge is something outside the soul, viz., the intelligible substance. This is predicated upon the Aristotelian principle that only an actual substance can bring a potential being into actuality.[166]

This is where the active intellect comes in. As we know from Aristotle's Alexandrian and Muslim commentators, the active intellect refers to the highest level of intelligibility in actuality. When the soul begins to understand intelligible substances, it becomes 'the acquired intellect, which is very close to the active intellect. The difference between the two is that the acquired intellect is a non-material form which was once close to matter and then disengaged from it after going through various stages whereas the active intellect is a form that has never been in matter and can only be non-material.'[167] If we understand the active intellect as the *principle* of universal knowledge and not a *kind* of knowledge, then the emphatic expression 'never been in matter' can be interpreted as another way of saying that the principles of universal knowledge cannot be derived from sensate experience. When we state such mathematical truths as 2+2=4, we partake of a universal axiom that is not derived from sense data. For Ibn Sīnā and Ṣadrā, such *a priori* truths are actualities that the intellect comes to discover rather than generate by itself. This suggests that the intellect can be said to exist properly to the extent to which it becomes related to

intelligible forms and substances. To that effect, Ibn Sīnā says that 'the universal intellect does not exist alone as an established state; rather the universal intellect exists in conceptualization.'[168] The philosophers call our relationship with such *a priori* truths 'conjunction with the active intellect.' As a principle of knowledge and cognition, the active intellect is seen as both an epistemic and metaphysical term. Ṣadrā states this very point when he says that 'the study of the active intellect in and of itself falls more properly within the domain of metaphysics (*al-ilāhiyyāt*) which investigates the states of the principles [of things] (*aḥwāl al-mabādi'*).'[169]

There are, however, shifting languages of personal and non-personal being used for the active intellect. Whether we conceive of the active intellect as a cosmological principle or noetic idea, it forms the backbone of the Greco-Islamic metaphysics of actuality.[170] More often than not, Ṣadrā uses a non-personal language when referring to it. In one of his summary definitions, he says that 'intellectual perception takes place through the unification of the soul with the active intellect which is the form of things or that in which these forms are found.'[171] In another passage, he says that 'the majority of the philosophers called these rays and lights active intellects; the Peripatetics, who are the followers of the First Teacher, called them the forms of knowledge (*al-ṣuwar al-'ilmiyyah*) subsisting in the Essence of God; the Platonists and their group called them illuminating similes (*al-muthul al-nūriyyah*) and divine forms (*al-ṣuwar al-ilāhiyyah*).'[172] As these quotes clarify, the active intellect is more of a principle of actual-disembodied thought than an individual being or packet of knowledge. Conjunction or unification with the active intellect does not suggest acquiring from it bits of universal knowledge such as '2+2=4' or all 'human beings are mortal.' The active intellect does not supply the philosopher with that kind of information or deduction, or prediction of any kind. As 'the form of things or that in which these forms are found,' it refers to the principle of thought and disembodied ('abstract') knowledge. In this sense, the active intellect is the universal

principle of intellection that enables the mind to connect 2 to 2 and induce it to arrive at the right conclusion. Thus it is said that 'the active intellect that is in us is all things in the sense that it is by itself the depository of all universal meanings found in existential forms in the universe.'[173]

Ṣadrā makes a similar point when he talks about how error is possible when one unites with the active intellect. We know the process by which we ascertain the truth or falsity of an empirical statement: we compare facts with ideas and pass a judgment. In such cases, we employ the correspondence theory of knowledge. In the case of intellectual knowledge where our main concern is not the relationship between facts and ideas but between ideas and ideas, i.e., concepts, we apply a different criterion of correspondence. Ṣadrā's quote from 'Allāmah Ḥillī's *Sharḥ tajrīd al-'aqā'id* makes it clear that the truth value of such propositions is determined according to their correspondence to what is contained in the active intellect. The quote in question reads that 'every form or established judgment in the mind corresponds to the forms engrained in the active intellect. [When this is the case], it is true; otherwise it is false.'[174] Ṣadrā concurs with this view by making all universally true propositions a part of the active intellect. This is possible only when we understand the active intellect as the depository of intelligible forms where all such universally true propositions are given as the *a priori* 'knowledge of all first principles' as opposed to 'description' (*taṣawwur*) and 'judgment' (*taṣdīq*), both of which are derived from logical syllogism.[175] In this sense, the active intellect is 'all intelligibles; in fact it is all beings insofar as its intellective existence is concerned.'[176]

The unity of the active intellect is an important premise of the Peripatetic tradition and underscores the universal nature of purely intellectual knowledge. The very same premise, however, has given rise to two major problems for the Muslim and Christian philosophers of the Middle Ages. The first is how the active intellect remains one as the depository of *all* intelligibles. If we are to imagine a case of unity-in-multiplicity, how would

it apply to the active intellect? The second problem is what happens when a multitude of human intellects conjoin or unite with the active intellect at the same time. Does the active intellect still remain one? If yes, how is the unity of intellectual knowledge maintained when a true proposition is known by two or more knowers?

Ṣadrā's answer to both of these questions is based on the gradation of existence. As stated before, 'meanings' (*ma'ānī*) as ontological properties exist as a single unity in incorporeal beings. The multiplicity of such meanings should not be confused with the kind of differentiation we see in corporeal substances. It is rather an internal enrichment and intensification of existence in the form of various modalities.

> The contingent beings that can be perceived are of four kinds: the first is the kind that is perfect in existence and known fully. These are the intellects and the intelligibles in actuality. Because of their intense existence, light and purity, they are above corporeal properties, shapes, and numbers. In spite of their multiplicity and abundance, they exist as one single total being with no distinction between their realities, for all of them are sunk in the sea of the Divine. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 502
>
> The intellective world is one single being with which all things in this world are conjoined. It is their beginning and end. It is the source of intelligibles and all essences without there being any multiplicity and division. Nothing is substracted from it with the effusion of something from it nor does it increase with the conjunction of something with it. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 336

In regards to the second question, Ṣadrā introduces two kinds of oneness (*waḥdah*): 'numerical oneness' (*waḥdah 'adadiyyah*) denotes something's being one as opposed to being two or three. When such numerical units are added up, they increase in number: two trees are more than one tree or five horses are less than seven horses. 'Intellective oneness' (*al-waḥdat al-'aqliyyah*) refers to a different kind of oneness where oneness is defined in terms of simplicity and does not increase or decrease when things are added to or detracted from it. An example of this is

the concept of humanity (*al-insān*): no matter how many accidental qualities we may add to it, humanity remains a single unit. There can be many humans, as there really are, with many different qualities. But this does not lead to two or three 'humanities.' The same applies to existence in that the existence of even an infinite number of beings does not affect the essential oneness of existence. Ṣadrā claims that the soul knows through this kind of epistemic or intellectual oneness. The crucial point is then to show how the soul remains one even when it knows a thousand things. Similarly, thanks to 'intellective oneness,' what the soul knows as an intelligible reality does not become many when it is known by more than one soul. That is why Ṣadrā says that 'the intellective horse that is in the active intellect and the intellective horse that is in the soul, when it becomes an actual intellect through it, does not become multiplied from the point of view of meaning and reality. It becomes multiplied only from the point of view adding something to its definition and conceptual reality. What is in the soul and what is in the active intellect are therefore one and the same thing.'[177] In short, neither the multiplicity of intellective forms in the active intellect nor the multiplicity of minds that know these forms blemishes the unity of conceptual knowledge.

One last issue concerning the active intellect is the use of the language of a personal being when the active intellect is presented as the Archangel Gabriel—a tradition that goes back to al-Fārābī. After stating that God knows things either through 'His Essence or through the agency of His sublime command (*amr*),' Ṣadrā says that this is called 'the active intellect and the spirit. It is the proximate angel encompassing many angels who are the soldiers of the Lord as God pointed to it in His words that "no one knows the soldiers of your Lord save He."'[178] It is also in this context that the active intellect is occasionally used in the plural when, for instance, Ṣadrā says that 'the active intellects (*uqūl fa''ālah*)…are God's words (*kalimāt Allāh*).'[179] This can be seen as an attempt to legitimize the active intellect within the Islamic religious discourse. Regardless of the

philosophers' intentions, however, positing the active intellect as the angel of revelation is consistent with Peripatetic intellectualism in that it is only by the intervention of an agent outside the knowing subject that one attains the true knowledge of things. As I shall discuss in the next chapter, this notion plays a crucial role in the 'rational mysticism' of the Muslim Peripatetics and gives Ṣadrā further reason to make a rigorous case for mystical knowledge.

Even though the active intellect is the locus of intelligible forms and thus indispensable for knowing concepts, there are several other stages involved. Following Ibn Sīnā, Ṣadrā defines all conceptual knowledge as coming from what he calls the 'world of the sacred' (*'ālam al-quds*). Human beings display different degrees of perspicacity in receiving illumination from this world. This leads to a hierarchy of perception whereby some people are endowed with an innate capacity to know *a priori* truths without much effort and study. This power or capacity is called intuition (*ḥads*)—a term Ṣadrā borrows from Ibn Sīnā.

For Ibn Sīnā, *ḥads* signifies the mind's ability to know the middle term in a logical syllogism without much effort: it is 'to remember the middle term without demanding it.'[180] That is why the word *ḥads* can legitimately be interpreted as 'quick wit.' Ṣadrā presents it as an exceptional faculty of the soul, which connects it to the 'Sacred Angelic world.' This establishes a direct link between the intuitive perception of primary intelligibles and receiving light and blessings from the Angelic world.

> Know that the source of all knowledge is the world of the sacred but the capacities of human souls are different. In the case of perfect capacity, there is no difference in abundance between the primary and secondary intelligibles. In perceiving the primary intelligibles, man is like when he understands the middle term in perceiving theoretical matters in such a way that understanding takes place as if without a cause whereas the existence of something without a cause is impossible. But the cause is sometimes outward and visible and sometimes inward and hidden. That which dictates knowledge

> to capable souls is in reality the very cause hidden from the senses… and its act on the souls is completely hidden but it may sometimes appear from the inward to the outward and become manifest from the abode of the Invisible (*al-ghayb*) to the world of the Visible (*al-shahādah*). The former is like the case of the prophets and the latter like the case of saints, peace be upon them all.
>
> As for such external causes as study, repetition, listening to a human teacher, these are only preparatory conditions, not what calls for them. This can be explained as follows: every passage from primary intelligibles to theoretical concepts (*al-naẓariyyāt*) is either through the instruction of a human teacher or not. If it is through the instruction of a teacher, this will have to end eventually with that which does not come about in this way, [in which case] one reaches the conclusion from one's own self. Otherwise the regression of teaching and learning will continue *ad infinitum*. *Asfār*, I, 3, pp. 384–385[181]

Having ruled out the possibility of infinite regression, Ṣadrā attributes one's ability to perceive the primary intelligibles to an inner faculty of the mind, which only a limited number of people possess. He calls this ability 'intuition' (*ḥads*), which leads to the apprehension of intelligible forms in an immediate and direct manner. This exceptional quality enables one to be illuminated by Angelic light (*nūr al-malakūt*) and is called 'sacred power' (*quwwah qudsiyyah*).

> Now, you know that definitions that correspond [to their objects] cause the mind to establish a relationship between the two. In most cases, the mind looks at the definition of a subject because it senses its particular qualities when its definition is present in it [i.e., the mind]. When this happens, the mind necessarily establishes this predicate for this subject without the aid of a teacher, narration, learning from a master or a just and reliable witness. Thus it is clear that man can learn by himself and whenever this happens, it is called intuition. This capacity displays great variety among people…when the degrees are unequal and the hearts different in purity and cloudiness, in intellectual power and weakness, plenitude and destitute in intuition, it does not affect, on the part of the higher [world], the existence of that noble and powerful soul which is fully

> illuminated by the light of the Angelic world and quick in receiving emanations from the source of goodness and mercy. Such a man, due to the intensity of his capacity, perceives most of the truths in the shortest time possible and comprehends the realities of things… and his piercing mind reaches at conclusions without assiduously studying the middle terms. In the same way, he passes from these conclusions to others until he encircles the ultimate goal and final stage of humanity. This capacity is called sacred power. *Asfār*, I, 3, pp. 385–386

These and similar remarks we find in Ibn Sīnā and Ṣadrā may lead us to think that a kind of *mysterium* is involved in the process of intellection. Although such terms as 'sacred intellect' (*'aql qudsī*) and 'sacred spirit' (*al-rūḥ al-qudsī*) used by Ibn Sīnā do suggest something of a mystical nature, a close reading of the *Shifā'* and *al-Najāt*, which Ṣadrā uses *in extenso*, reveals that Ibn Sīnā does not go beyond establishing 'quick apprehension' and perspicacity as an exceptional quality of certain minds. In one place, Ṣadrā describes intelligence or perspicacity (*ẓakā'*) as the 'most intense form of intuition.'[182] The same point is also borne out by the fact that both Ibn Sīnā and Ṣadrā discuss intuition as an important yet intermediary stage in logical syllogism. The following paragraph from the *Najāt* illustrates this point:

> Know that learning, whether acquired without a teacher or from a teacher, is of different kinds. A particular learner can be closer to the [logical] description (*taṣawwur*) [of a term] because his [individual] capacity before [receiving] the capacity that we mentioned before can be stronger. If such person becomes capable of perfecting what is between description and himself [i.e., having a perfect understanding of logical description], this strong capacity is called intuition. This capacity may be stronger in some people so much so that he does not need anything significant or *takhrīj*,[183] or study in his conjunction with the active intellect. Furthermore, he becomes even more capable of this and as if a second capacity occurs for him and as if he knows everything by himself. This is the highest degree of this capacity. This state of the potential intellect should be called the sacred intellect.[184] Although this is a kind of the

> habitual intellect (*al-'aql bi'l-malakah*), it is [a] much higher [intellect] of which not all people partake. *al-Najāt*, p. 205

Few lines later, Ibn Sīnā returns to intuition and explains its role in logical syllogisms. At the end of his discussion, he refers to intuition as a 'prophetic capacity' and calls it a 'sacred capacity.' He says that 'intuition is a work of the mind whereby it deduces the middle term by itself. Perspicacity is thus a power of intuition.' Still, it is defined as a 'divine effusion and intellective conjunction (*ittiṣāl 'aqlī*) that obtains without (intentionally) acquiring it, and reaches only some people.'[185] Some people have this exceptional quality in them in such a way that they come to have a 'union with intellectual principles' (*al-mabādī' al-'aqliyyah*). While knowledge based on imitation (*al-taqlīdiyyāt*) does not bring about 'intellective certitude' (*yaqīniyyah 'aqliyyah*), intuition based on perspicacity is 'a kind of prophethood (*al-nubuwwah*). In fact, it is the highest faculty of prophethood. It is more appropriate to call this ability a sacred capacity (*quwwah qudsiyyah*). And this is the highest degree of human capacity [to know].'[186]

Even though Ibn Sīnā remains within the boundaries of 'rational mysticism' when he talks about intuition and the 'sacred world,' Ṣadrā does not miss the opportunity to interpret intuitive perception eventually in terms of mystical knowledge. In a section of the *Asfār* where mental existence is discussed, Ṣadrā states that what the mind creates through its imaginative power (*khayāl*) has no effect in the external world, and he invokes Ibn al-'Arabī's support to substantiate his claim. He, however, makes an important exception to this and assigns a special power to certain people to create actual effects in the extra-mental world. Even though Ṣadrā does not state it explicitly, it is not difficult to see that this is a reference to miracles performed by saints.

> Some of the people of ascent (*mi'rāj*) who have completely disembodied themselves from the human garment are capable of generating (*iḥdāth*) things that exist in the external world to which (existential) effects occur. This is due to the intensity of their

> conjunction (*ittiṣāl*) with the sacred world, the abode of munificence (*maḥall al-karāmah*), and the perfection of their power. As for the kind of existence to which existential effects do not occur and which emanates from the soul in this mode of appearance (*ẓuhūr*), it is called mental and shadow existence. *Asfār*, I, 1, p. 266

In conclusion, the active intellect brings us back to what I called the metaphysics of actuality. The active intellect terminates the infinite regression of potential substances and relates the soul to the *a priori* axioms of logic and metaphysics. There, however, remains a tension between the active intellect as *the source of human thought* and Ṣadrā's overall concept of knowledge as a mode of existence. It seems that Ṣadrā could easily dispense with the active intellect as an agent of knowledge for his robust defense of the unification argument contains virtually no references to the active intellect in the process of human intellection. As I shall discuss below, when Ṣadrā talks about unification, he has in mind unification between intellect and intelligible, not between human and active intellects. As a matter of fact, he discusses conjunction with the active intellect (*ittiṣāl bi'l-'aql al-fa''āl*) only indirectly, and what he has to say about it is not any different from Ibn Sīnā. Unless we equate the active intellect with the intelligible, Ṣadrā's desire to retain the active intellect seems to be out of place.

There is, however, another way of looking at the active intellect, i.e., as an instrument of thought. If the active intellect is an agent that brings about unification between the intellect and the intelligible, then it can be related to knowledge as a way of unveiling the modalities of existence. In this case, unification between intellect and intelligible would *also* be a unification with the active intellect, and the active intellect would be subsumed under the intelligible. And yet, Ṣadrā tells us very little about how these two are related.

e. Unification of the Intellect and the Intelligible

Ṣadrā's defense of the unification argument is found in many of his works. In addition to the relevant sections of the *Asfār* and *al-Shawāhid al-rubūbiyyah*, his *Risālah fī ittiḥād al-'āqil wa'l-ma'qūl* is devoted entirely to the subject. Throughout his extensive discussions, Ṣadrā's main target is Ibn Sīnā and his attacks on Porphyry. Since the translation of the *Ittiḥād* is given as an appendix at the end of the present work, I shall mention only Ṣadrā's main points against Ibn Sīnā. As it is clear from Ṣadrā's analyses, Ibn Sīnā's denial of unification was a result of his ontological considerations. To that effect, Ṣadrā returns to his gradational ontology before answering Ibn Sīnā in detail.

Ibn Sīnā's rejection of unification between the intellect and the intelligible was an extension of his rejection of unification between any two things. For him, unification had meant the dissolution of the subject in question and the generation of a new substance. It is not possible within the context of the Aristotelian-Avicennan notion of quantitative change to accept the view that when A and B are united, the result is a higher mode of A or B rather than a different substance called C. For the Peripatetics, when two things are united, they are transformed into a new substance and lose their initial identity. Ibn Sīnā's radical conclusion was that unification as understood by Porphyry and his followers amounts to nothing but 'poetic metaphors'—an expected conclusion within the precincts of Peripatetic ontology.[187] Historically speaking, this goes back to Aristotle's denial of change in the category of substance. Aristotle's working principle was that no matter what accidental qualities a particular substance may have, they do not infringe upon the essential identity of the substance. Following Aristotle, Kindī goes so far as to say that substance 'is not receptive to generation and corruption.'[188] A similar problem arises when substances increase or decrease in quantity. Ṣadrā notes the notorious difficulties caused by quantitative change, and says that Suhrawardī was forced to deny it altogether: 'The problem of motion [i.e.,

change] in the category of quantity…caused later thinkers many problems so much so that the author of [*Ḥikmat*] *al-ishrāq* [Suhrawardī] and his followers denied it by saying that adding a definite quantity to another quantity necessitates its dissolution.'[189] Ibn Sīnā had faced similar difficulties, for he had accepted quantitative change in substances as a subcategory of generation and corruption rather than as intensification in existence.

To respond to these criticisms, Ṣadrā mentions three types of unification between two or more things. Before giving specific answers to Ibn Sīnā, however, he reiterates the primacy and gradation of existence. For Ṣadrā, it is only by accepting gradation in degrees of existence and its multiple modes that one can conceive unification between any two things as 'existential fulfilment.' In this sense, Ṣadrā's response to Ibn Sīnā entails also a critique of Avicennan ontology:

> Two things need to be known before we embark upon rejecting the Master's (Ibn Sīnā's) denial of unification between two things in general and between the intellect and the intelligible in particular. First of all, it is existence that is the principal reality in all things, principle of its own particularity and source of its own quiddity. Existence allows intensification and diminution, perfection and deficiency. And the individual is what it is. Do you not see that from the beginning of his being a sperm and drop to the height of his being an intellectual and intelligible reality, man goes through many stages and undergoes many changes while preserving his mode of existence and personality? Secondly, unification can be described in three ways.
>
> First, an existent (*mawjūd*) is united with another existent in that the beings of two things become one. There is no doubt that this is impossible as the Master said in his proofs for the denial of unification.
>
> Second, a concept or quiddity becomes another concept or quiddity different from itself in that the first concept becomes identical with the [second] concept and the first quiddity with the [second] quiddity through essential primary predication (*ḥaml dhātī awwalī*).[190] This is also impossible. Different concepts do not

> become one nor some of them become [united with] others insofar as they are concepts because every meaning is necessarily different from others insofar as they are meaning. For instance, the concept of the intellector cannot become the concept of the intelligible in spite of the fact that a simple and single being can be the subject of [the propositions] that it is an intellector and that it is an intelligible. As a result, existence can be one and meanings [predicated of it] many without necessitating the multiplicity of existential aspects [qualities].
>
> Third, it is the transformation of an existent in that an intellective meaning and universal quiddity that was not available to it before is predicated of it as a result of the perfection that takes place in its existence. Now, this [meaning of unification] is not impossible. On the contrary, it is an actual reality since all intelligible meanings found separately in material, plant, and animal beings are found united in one single human being. *Asfār*, I, 3, pp. 324–325

Ṣadrā understands unification in the sense that one single being can take on multiple meanings without losing its essential identity. The multiplicity of meanings as 'ontological properties' does not lead to an entity with discrete properties, causing it to lose its essential unity. Rather, it results in a single unity that obtains a higher ontological state thanks to the intensity of meanings and concepts contained in it. The key point for Ṣadrā is therefore the possibility of containing multiple meanings (*ma'ānī*) and states of intellective existence while preserving one's identity and unity. Ṣadrā's frequent example is again 'man' who contains the states of mineral, plant, and animal existence in a simple manner, all of which grant him a higher ontological status. The definition of man as 'rational animal' (*ḥayawān nāṭiq*), for instance, is composed of two separate concepts, i.e., 'rational' and 'animal.' When combined in the existence of man, they assume one single existence without any duality. Thus Ibn Sīnā's objection that when two things conjoin, they lose their previous existence and become a new entity does not apply to such 'meanings.'[191]

Ṣadrā mentions another reason for Ibn Sīnā's objection: the Peripatetic concept of change or transformation (*istiḥālah*) is

based on the idea that gradual change, whether quantitative or qualitative, takes place through a series of instant generations (*kawn*) and corruptions (*fasād*). It is the successive stages of generation and corruption that account for change in physical objects. The Peripatetics had denied change in the category of substance for the same reason: change in substance entails the generation of a new existent. Furthermore, it breaks the continuity of substances as ontological actualities.[192] In short, Aristotelian ontology of substances disallows a dynamic, transformative and existential concept of the universe because it visions a world made up of solid and rigid substances. By contrast, Ṣadrā argues for ontological continuity through existence and its modalities and states that things change from one state to another due to their intensification in existence. This is called 'substantial motion' and Ṣadrā applies it to everything from the most corporeal to the angelic beings. What distinguishes Ṣadrā from Ibn Sīnā is that while the Peripatetics consider the world as a structure of actual and unbroken substances, Ṣadrā seeks to desolidify substances into states and 'instances' of existence with varying degrees of intensity.

As we would expect, this view of substantial-cum-ontological change dissolves any strong boundaries between the physical and the non-physical. In a sense, Ṣadrā turns the entire system of existence into a transparent structure in which 'existence-as-graded' (*al-wujūd bi'l-tashkīk*) weaves the physical and the metaphysical together. Things become 'material' or 'non-material' in accordance with their proximity to or distance from existence. The physical and the metaphysical exist through an ontological continuum, the only distinguishing factor being the level of intensity or lack thereof. This makes the physical order an extension of existence at a lower level, not the opposite of what is beyond the physical. An important problem to which Ṣadrā applies this view is the relation between the soul and the body. According to Ṣadrā's celebrated formula, the human soul (or the self)[193] is material in its origination and spiritual in its subsistence. What transforms the soul from being a material

substance into something incorporeal is the existential-substantial journey it undergoes. Needless to say, this establishes an ontological continuity between soul and body and holds true for all souls from the insane to the prophet.[194] Ṣadrā describes this process as follows:

> …when the soul first dawned upon the matter of the body, it was one of the forms of corporeal existents. It was like the sensible and imaginal forms, not one of the intelligible forms. It is impossible that a single corporeal species should come out of an intellective form and a corporeal existent without this corporeal existent undergoing [a series of] perfections and transformations…. The soul in its initial stages of disposition (*fiṭrah*) is simply one of the forms of this [corporeal] world except for the fact that it has the potentiality of journeying into the Angelic world in a gradual manner. It is first a form of corporeal existents with the potentiality of receiving intelligible forms, and there is no contradiction between this actuality and receiving perfection. As it was quoted from the Master [Ibn Sīnā], [the origination of] something from something else can be either through perfection, which is the series of vertical journeys (*sulūk al-silsilah al-ṭūliyyah*) or through mutual corruption and dissolution, which is the series of horizontal journeys. *Asfār*, I, 3, pp. 330–331

Having answered Ibn Sīnā's 'general proof' (*al-ḥujjat al-'āmmah*) against the unification of any two things, Ṣadrā turns to his 'specific proof' (*al-ḥujjat al-khāṣṣah*). Ibn Sīnā's specific objection was that if we allow the soul to be united with an intellective substance, it becomes dissolved in it, and this undermines the continuity of the self. Instead, Ibn Sīnā argued, intelligible forms come to reside in the soul as separate substances without destroying its unity. This takes place through conjunction (*ittiṣāl*) rather than unification (*ittiḥād*). Ṣadrā accepts the charge that something becomes dissolved in any process of unification but hastens to add that this does not alter the essential nature of the knowing intellect because what becomes dissolved is nothing other than the 'negative existential qualities' of the self which prevent it, or any other substance for

that matter, from evolving into a higher state of existence.[195] When such 'negative qualities' are left behind, the self does not become something less. Instead, it attains a higher level of existence and consciousness. When the soul appropriates an intelligible form, it becomes something 'more' thanks to the existential cognition it undergoes. Moreover, what enables the soul to know things other than itself is its isomorphic unity with the non-subjective world.

This is an extension of Aristotle's celebrated dictum that 'only the like can know the like,' of which Ṣadrā makes full use when he explains how the self is linked to what it knows. In the Aristotelian language of actuality and potentiality, this is stated as the soul's predisposition to know things before it receives an intelligible form. When the soul extracts a form, it does not cease to be itself but attains a higher level of cognition. This, in turn, establishes a strong link between the 'self' and the 'world,' and places the self within a larger context of existential relations. In other words, the knowing self encounters a world made up of relations of existence and structures of meaning. Unification between intellect and intelligible makes the self a reality whose meaning can be made explicit only by articulating its relation to the non-subjective world.

> From the point of view of the self (*al-nafs*), how can an essence [essentially] separate from the intellect think of an intellective form whose essence (*al-dhāt*) is different from it and whose existence is outside its existence?… The intellective being as completely disengaged from matter and its relations cannot be established for anything unless there is something like this being in it by which it becomes an intellect and intelligible in actuality. An intelligible in actuality can be established only for an intelligible that is already actual. By the same token, the potential intelligible, which is the form of material beings, can be established only for a potential intelligible like corporeal beings (*ajsām*) and measures (*maqādir*), which are the material positions (*awḍāʿ*) themselves. You have already learnt that the soul, before it becomes an intelligible, is not the subject of any intellective forms except potentially. We see this in the case of imaginal and estimative forms before the light of the

> active intellect shines upon the imaginal faculty and these forms. As for the intellective forms themselves, you have learnt from the proof with which God has inspired me that they are of an intelligible nature in and of themselves whether or not there is anything in the universe that intellects them. Therefore, when these forms are intelligible and self-intellecting in themselves regardless of the soul [that intellects them], then it is not impossible that the soul be united with them. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 334

By establishing an isomorphic unity between intellect ('subject') and intelligible world ('object'), Ṣadrā takes a crucial step toward asserting the primacy of self-knowledge on the one hand, and knowledge-by-presence, on the other. Ṣadrā's radical claim is that all knowledge is mediated through self-knowledge and, by the same token, all true knowledge is obtained through knowledge-by-presence. By placing knowledge of self in the intelligible world, Ṣadrā de-centers the self, and shifts the focus from the knowing subject as a disengaged agent presiding over the world to a self placed within a larger context of ontological intelligibility.

f. Self-Knowledge and Knowledge-by-Presence

What is known as 'knowledge-by-presence' or 'presential knowledge' (*al-'ilm al-ḥuḍūrī*) in Islamic philosophy was developed by Suhrawardī to overcome certain difficulties of the representational theory of knowledge. Ṣadrā agrees with Suhrawardī's assumption that self-knowledge cannot be a representation (*irtisām*) of the self in the mind because representation cannot overcome the subject-object dichotomy. When the self expresses its knowledge of itself in terms of first-order propositions such as 'I am in pain' or 'I feel hot,' subject and predicate are the same. As Ṣadrā puts it, 'if the perception of something were to consist of the presentation of its form in the perceiver, whoever perceives himself would be different from the locus [of perception, i.e., from himself]…this is a clear contradiction.'[196] In short, 'knowledge of self is nothing but the

self itself.'[197] In the case of second-order propositions, however, the judgment is translated into a statement *about* the self, leading to a distinction between the self and its judgment. Thus Ṣadrā says that 'the perception of one's identity (*huwiyyah*) and his reception of his own essence through presential unveiling (*al-kashf al-ḥuḍūrī*) is one thing; the perception of his essence (*māhiyyah*) is another.'[198] As Wittgenstein says, the difference between the propositions 'I am in pain' and 'I know I am in pain' can be stated as a difference between first- and second-order propositions. Insofar as the subject expressing his pain is concerned, the expression 'I know I am in pain' amounts to saying 'I am in pain.' In the case of first-order propositions, I state the fact that 'I am in pain' whereas in second-order propositions I make a statement *about* the fact that I know I am in pain.

As in many other key issues, Ibn Sīnā seems to have planted the first seed of the debate. Responding to a question in the *Mubāḥathāt* (question number 433), Ibn Sīnā makes a distinction between our knowledge of things outside the self and the knowledge of the self. The question is formulated as follows: 'If intellection is the obtaining of the truth of what is known for the knower, when we intellect God and the active intellects, then their truth obtains in us. In this case, they have two truths. Why are we not allowed to say the same thing, i.e., that two [separate] truths obtain for us also?' Ibn Sīnā answers by saying that 'when we are able to intellect disembodied beings, their truth is represented in us. In this case, they have two truths: their own truth in and by themselves, by which they are disembodied beings, and the truth represented in us. But this does not apply to [our] intellects.'[199] Continuing the same argument, Ibn Sīnā adds that 'it is part of our nature to know ourselves, whether through innate (*ṭab'*) or acquired (*kasb*) knowledge. Some things know their own essence and substance. Whoever knows something, the truth of that thing obtains for him. In the same way, the truth of ourselves obtains for us but not twice because the truth of something is only once.'[200]

This suggests that everything we know has two truths: its truth in itself and its representation in us. This conclusion, however, seems to go against Ibn Sīnā's previous assertion that the 'truth of something obtains only once.' Ibn Sīnā is aware of this contradiction and hastens to add that our knowledge of ourselves is not like the knowledge of other things. In the case of self-knowledge, we know ourselves directly. In other words, the 'truth of ourselves' is only one, and this applies not only to 'intellection (*ta'aqqul*) or consciousness (*shu'ūr*) but to all perception (*idrāk*) because we consider the truth of something not insofar as it is in the external world but insofar as it is in us. This consideration is not a third existence for it but its very imprint in us. Otherwise it would lead to infinite regression.' Stated rather abstrusely, Ibn Sīnā's point is to draw a distinction between the way we know things and the way we know ourselves.

The primacy of first-order experiences is also confirmed by the way we relate to our bodily organs. I do not refer to my seeing something as 'my eyes seeing' or hearing as 'my ears hearing.' The proper way of referring to these experiences is to say that 'I see this' or 'I hear that.'[201] Thus we cannot substitute second-order propositions for first-order experiences. Ṣadrā asserts this point for self-knowledge when he says that our 'self-knowledge' or self-awareness (*'ilmunā bi-dhātinā*) is different from the 'knowledge of our self-knowledge' (*'ilmunā bi-'ilminā bi-dhātinā*).[202] Furthermore, second-order concepts apply primarily to representational knowledge whereby the subject predicates certain properties to things in the extra-mental world. Although this is a theme shared by both Ṣadrā and Suhrawardī, there is a fundamental difference as to how the two philosophers justify knowledge-by-presence.

We have already discussed the major differences between Suhrawardīan 'essentialism' (*aṣālat al-mahiyyah*) and Sadrean 'existentialism' (*aṣālat al-wujūd*). As a general rule, Ṣadrā turns to the primacy of existence and draws attention to a contradiction in Suhrawardī's relegation of existence to a mental concept:

> If someone is ignorant about the question of existence, he is of necessity ignorant about all of the principles and foundations of knowledge for it is through existence that everything is known, and it is the beginning of all description (*taṣawwur*) and more known than anything that provides description. When someone ignores it, he ignores everything besides it. As we have mentioned before, the true knowledge of existence comes about only through unveiling (*kashf*) and witnessing (*mushāhadah*). It has thus been said that 'he who has no unveiling has no knowledge.' It is strange that this great master [i.e., Suhrawardī], after establishing a number of arguments in the *Talwīḥāt* that existence is a mental concept (*i'tibārī*) possessing no form and reality in the external world, explained towards the end of this book that the human souls and what is above them are simple beings without quiddity. Is this not a clear contradiction on his part? *Shawāhid*, p. 14

It is clear that Ṣadrā understands 'simple beings without quiddity' as a description of existence and wonders how Suhrawardī could have possibly missed this point. What this implies for knowledge is not difficult to see: definition of knowledge as a 'mode of existence' (*naḥw al-wujūd*) defines the *ultimate* object of knowledge not as facts, concepts, relations or even *a priori* judgments but as existence. In this regard, what is known even in the mind as a concept is nothing but existence, though in a different modality. Suhrawardī's failure results from not seeing this point. Yet, despite this essential difference, Ṣadrā accepts much of what Suhrawardī has to say about knowledge-as-light and knowledge-by-presence. By avoiding the language of essences, Ṣadrā translates Suhrawardī's essentialist language of light (*al-nūr*) into his language of existence: 'The truth is what he has to say concerning the knowledge of the disengaged substance of itself in that it is a light for itself—and light is existence—, and this goes back to our previous view that knowledge is existence.'[203]

To see how Ṣadrā dovetails Suhrawardī's self-knowledge with his own knowledge-as-existence, first we have to look at Suhrawardī's discussion of self-knowledge as a case of unity

between self and knowledge. Suhrawardī broaches the subject as follows:

> When we perceive our own selves, this perception does not come about through a [representational] form for several reasons. First of all, the form that is in the soul is not the same as the soul, and the perceiver perceives something that is identical with its 'I-ness' (*anā'iyyah*), not something that corresponds to it. Every form that the perceiver has is superadded to it and remains as an 'it' (*huwa*) in that it does not become an 'I' (*ana'*) for it. Thus we conclude that perception is not through representational form. *al-Mashāri' wa'l-muṭaraḥāt*, p. 484[204]

The first part of the argument, which sums up much of what Ṣadrā has to say about the subject, considers self-knowledge as a perfect example of non-representational knowledge. To take self-knowledge as a representation of the self to itself is to deny the possibility of knowing oneself directly. The second part of Suhrawardī's argument pertains to the concrete and particular nature of self-awareness: we perceive ourselves not as a universal but as concrete individual beings. Suhrawardī continues:

> Secondly, if the self's perception of itself were through representational form and since every form that obtains in the soul is universal, then it would correspond to many subjects. Even if we take all of the universals particularized through a single individual, they would not cease to be universals. But everybody perceives himself in a way that does not allow commonality (*shirkah*) [with others]. Thus his intellection of his particular self can never be a representational form. Furthermore, the self perceives its body, estimation (*wahm*) and imagination (*khayāl*). If it were to perceive these things through a representational form in itself—and these forms are universals—then the self would be moving a universal body and acting upon a universal potentiality and would not have a perception of its own body and its potentialities. This is definitely false. *al-Mashāri' wa'l-muṭaraḥāt*, p. 484[205]

Suhrawardī gives the example of pain as a paradigm case of sense perception and argues that *perception of* pain *is* its very 'presence' (*ḥuḍūr*) in the perceiver.

> One of the points that support our claim that we have perceptions that do not need a form other than the very presence of what is perceived is the following: one is in pain of a cut in one of his organs and feels it. But this cut does not assume another form of representation in this organ or another. Rather, what is perceived is this very cut, and it is what is sensed and pain by itself, not by another form that issues from it. This proves that among the things perceived it is sufficient for their essence, in order for them to be perceived, to be in the soul or to have a relation of presence particular to the soul. *al-Mashāri' wa'l-muṭaraḥāt*, p. 485

It is interesting to note that pain as a form of sensation is also used by Wittgenstein to address the dichotomy between subject and object.[206] Speaking of sensations as states of existence rather than mental or verbal representations, Wittgenstein argues for the identification of *being in* pain and *consciousness of* pain.[207] In the case of pain, the I that is in pain and the I that says that it is in pain are one and the same thing. We cannot possibly claim to have a representation of pain to ourselves in the way we represent the form of a tree in our minds. This we can do only by reflecting about the fact that I am in pain.

Even though the example above establishes the essential unity of *being in* pain and *knowledge of* pain, it is confined to sense perception only. But sensation does not yield universal knowledge and thus cannot be considered a reliable basis for veritable knowledge. It is with this caveat in mind that Ṣadrā seeks to formulate knowledge-by-presence as a primary mode of knowing that can account for both sense-perception and conceptual knowledge.[208] Unification of intellect and intelligible already implies this very premise: perfect cognition obtains when there is no epistemic rupture between knowledge and knower.

Ṣadrā makes his case as follows:

> Knowledge does not simply consist of the concept of the disengaged form (*al-ṣūrat al-mujarradah*) of something in that when we represent this form [in our minds], we necessarily obtain its knowledge. Rather, knowledge is the mode of the existence of something that is disengaged from matter. Existence cannot be represented through a mental image in its entirety and thoroughly except through its own existing identity (*huwiyyah*).[209] [...]
>
> Our knowledge of ourselves is the same as our existence whereas the knowledge of our knowledge of ourselves is not our own existence but a mental form added to it. [This mental form] is not our personal identity, and has its own mental identity. By the same token, the knowledge that we have through this knowledge is a form added to the two former identities of knowledge, and this continues until mental consideration and representation come to an end. This does not necessitate the conjoining of the two [mental] images at the same level because, as it was repeated before, existence, whether *in concreto* or in the mind, does not have an epistemic image or form that corresponds to it through its essence and identity. When we know our individual existential identity (*huwiyyatunā al-shakhṣiyyah al-wujūdiyyah*) through an extraneous knowledge (*'ilm zā'id*), this knowledge is only an accident that subsists through and is different from our existence, not comparable to ourselves. The same [principle] holds true for all knowledge about knowledge because all knowledge is a mode of existence and can be obtained not through another [mental] form but by itself. *Asfār*, I, 3, pp. 295–296[210]

It is against this background that Ṣadrā takes a further step and makes the bold claim that knowledge-by-presence applies not only to sensation and self-knowledge but to all intellection. Just as sense-perception is predicated upon the unity of the subject who says 'I am in pain' and the subject who actually is in pain, intellectual perception implies the presence of the intellective form in the knower. As we have seen before, this signifies a higher mode of perception and a higher level of intelligibility whereby the 'mind' appropriates the true meaning of things, i.e., their intelligible reality by uniting with their essences in the world of the *intelligibilia*.

From the point of view of unification, the intellect does not become one with the corporeal tree or horse but unites with their intelligible form, thus overcoming the dichotomy between subject and object—the ultimate goal of knowledge-by-presence. It may be argued against Ṣadrā that this process of intellection takes place in the intellect and thus reduces knowledge eventually to the internal workings of the knowing mind. This criticism, however, does not hold up because Ṣadrā defines intellection as a 'reaching-out' of the intellect to the intelligible world which is already outside the individual intellect. This conclusion is also warranted by Ṣadrā's oft-repeated view that the intelligible reality of things is more real and concrete than their physical embodiments. Ṣadrā says that

> the intellective forms of substances that exist *in concreto* are the very meanings of these realities and their real essences. A substance or a physical body, for instance, has a meaning (*ma'nā*) and a sensible form. Now, its sensible form is the sensate substance and its intellective form the meaning of substance. It is this intellective meaning that the intellect perceives by itself. *Asfār*, I, 3, pp. 307–308

As for Ṣadrā's claim that self-knowledge is co-terminus with all types of cognition, it is based on the idea that self-consciousness as described above underlies all knowledge because I cannot be said to know something without knowing myself first in some fashion. Whether related to self or to objects in the external world, knowledge is mediated through self-knowledge and consciousness.[211] In Ṣadrā's words, 'the self-perception of something is its very essence and its essence perceives itself continuously…man's knowledge of himself and his essence precedes all knowledge and is always present to himself.'[212] By the same token, 'knowledge of self (obtained) through its faculties and specific effects such as its own self-knowledge takes place through presence (*ḥuḍūr*); but it may also take place through attainment (*ḥuṣūl*). Yet the former is necessary and continuous whereas the latter depends on appropriate time and

conditions'.[213] Furthermore, the soul, since it is free from matter, knows itself through its own existence, not through an abstract form.[214] We thus come full circle from the universality and generality of conceptual knowledge to the particularity of presential knowledge. This, it seems, is the synthesis that Ṣadrā seeks to achieve—a synthesis between the Peripatetic and Illuminationist traditions on the one hand, and between knowledge as concept and knowledge as presence, on the other.

g. Knowledge-by-Presence and God's Knowledge of Things

In addition to self-knowledge, Ṣadrā applies knowledge-by-presence to one of the most disputed problems of Islamic philosophy and theology, i.e., God's knowledge of things. Ṣadrā's analysis is very elaborate and detailed as he tries at one stroke to dovetail the views of Plato, Ibn Sīnā, Suhrawardī, Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī, Ibn al-'Arabī, and Fakhr al-Dīn Rāzī. I shall discuss this problem here only to the extent to which it is relevant to the problem of knowledge-by-presence.[215] The problem can be stated as follows: does God know things through representation as the Peripatetic philosophers seem to claim? Or does He have a mode of knowing different than ours, something like a direct vision? When we accept the first assumption, we run into a serious theological problem: representation entails the posterior presence of the form of things in the knowing mind and, when applied to God, amounts to claiming that God knows things as objects external to Himself. If the way God knows things is not essentially different from the way we know objects in the external world, then we define God's knowledge of things as following rather preceding their existence. But since the existence of things precedes our knowledge of them, this cannot apply to God who as the Creator grants them their existence.

Furthermore, if God knows things through representation, then we have to admit that forms appear in God's mind as object of knowledge only after God has thought them. But this, in turn,

assumes an epistemological distance between God and His creation, which goes against God's being omnipotent (*al-qādir*) and omniscient (*al-'ālim*). If God knows what He creates, then His knowledge of things cannot be a derivative one. Moreover, the imprinting of representational forms in the mind of human beings or God takes place only through universal and abstract concepts whereas real knowledge is always particular and concrete. Finally, there is the problem of change that comes about as a result of knowing something. If God's knowledge of changing things leads to a change in His knowledge, then how can we maintain His unity? If it is admitted that 'knowledge of change is change of knowledge,' then all Divine knowledge leads to change in the Divine essence.

Ibn Sīnā had proposed the notion of God knowing in a 'universal' or 'general manner' (*naḥw kullī*) to avoid introducing change in the Divine.[216] Ibn Sīnā's rather unsatisfactory solution was to absolve God of the *need to know* certain things, i.e., the particulars (*juz'iyyāt*). If God as the creator of things knows them in a universal manner, he will not be subject to the particular conditions of sensation or imagination. This, however, seems to suggest that the only proper knowledge available to God is His knowledge of Himself. But if God is said to know only Himself and everything else through this unchanging knowledge, then how can He be called *al-'ālim*, i.e., the knower in a theological sense? Given these theological difficulties, Ṣadrā attempts to articulate a theory of knowledge in which God as both creator and knower can be legitimately said to know things.

Ṣadrā broaches the subject with a useful summary of the views of previous philosophers, and cites seven of them in some detail. The first view held by al-Fārābī, Ibn Sīnā, Bahmanyār and Abū'l-'Abbās al-Lawkarī argues that the forms of contingent beings are imprinted upon God's Essence through mental representation in a universal manner. The second view is that of Suhrawardī and the School of Illumination, which holds that 'the existence of the forms of things in the external world—whether

they are separate substances or composite or simple corporeal bodies—are the modes of His knowledge of things.'[217] The third view attributed to Porphyry asserts God's unification with intelligible forms. The fourth view ascribed to Plato holds that the separate forms and intellective archetypes (*muthul*) are the Divine knowledge by which God knows things. The fifth view held by the Mu'tazilites, which Ṣadrā says is comparable to the view of certain Sufis, states that God knows contingent beings in eternity. This view has some affinity with that of the Sufis because they hold that things exist in God's knowledge before they are actualized in the external world. This can be taken to be a reference to Ibn al-'Arabī's famous saying that 'eternal archetypes have not smelled the perfume of [material] existence.' The sixth view, shared by most of the later theologians (*al-muta'akhkhirūn*), attributes two modes of knowledge to God: summary (*ijmālī*) and detailed (*tafṣīlī*). God's universal and summary knowledge of things precedes their concrete existence whereas His detailed mode of knowledge is simultaneous with their existence *in concreto*. The last view, which is a variation of the previous theory, holds that God knows the first effect in detail and everything else in a universal and summary fashion, which can be interpreted as a middle position between the Peripatetic and Ash'arite views.[218]

In giving his overall evaluation of the views above, Ṣadrā divides them into two main groups: those that consider God's knowledge of things separate from His Essence and those that do not. The distinction is simple yet essential, and helps Ṣadrā place the problem within an ontological context. He develops his position as follows:

> This is a detailed description of the views common among people. In affirming God's knowledge of things, there are two possible ways: either we say that it is separate from His Essence or not. Those who hold the view of separation either argue for the affirmation of non-existents (*al-ma'dūmāt*) or not, i.e., whether they are attributed to external existence as in the case of the Mu'tazilites or to the mind as in the case of some Sufi masters like the master

> sage and verifier (*al-muḥaqqiq*) Muḥy al-Dīn al-ʻArabī and the perfect master Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī from whose famous books benefits are derived. According to the second view, we either have to say that God's knowledge of external beings is forms that subsist by themselves and is separate from Him and other things—and these are the Platonic Archetypes and separate forms—or we have to say that His knowledge of external beings is the things themselves…as for those who argue for the non-separation [of God's knowledge from His Essence], they either have to say that it is other than His Essence, which is the view of the two Masters al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā, or they have to say that it is the same as His Essence. In the second case, they either have to admit, like Porphyry and his followers among the Peripatetics, that His Essence is united with intellective forms or to say that His Essence by Itself has the summary knowledge of everything other than Himself and other than the first effect [i.e., the first created being] in the manner to which we have already alluded. *Asfār*, III, 1, pp. 181–182

Keeping this historical background in mind, Ṣadrā develops two main arguments. The first is based on ontological causality according to which knowledge of cause is superior to knowledge of effect. Just as substance has ontological priority over accident, our knowledge of substance precedes that of accident in degrees of truth and intelligibility because, as a typical Aristotelian argument (*Posterior Analytics*, 71b 10), we can know an effect fully when we know its cause. Furthermore, according to Ṣadrā's oft-repeated principle, knowledge of cause leads to knowledge of effect but not vice versa. In terms of ontological hierarchy, effect has no impact on its cause whereas cause is the *raison d'être* of the effect.[219] When we affirm the existence of a building, for instance, we intuitively conclude that 'the knowledge of the building does not necessitate the knowledge of the builder but leads to the knowledge of the need of the building for its builder.'[220] When applied to God's relation to the world which He has created, the language of causality argues that God as the ultimate substance knows and sustains things through His existence. God is the ground of all beings but, more importantly, His knowledge is the source of all knowledge. If

everything is known fully when its cause is known, then God, as the cause of all things, knows things by knowing Himself.

If God's existence precedes all other existents and existence implies knowledge and consciousness, then there is no reason why *His* knowledge should not precede knowledge *per se*.

> The occurrence[221] of knowledge to its individual (carriers) is like the occurrence of existence to them through gradation, i.e., priority and non-priority, posteriority and non-posteriority, and intensity and weakness. God's knowledge is the most primary in being a knowledge [that comprehends everything] outside Himself. It is the most prior knowledge for it is the cause of all other knowledge and the most intense in clarity and most powerful in manifestation. As for its being veiled to us, it is, as you have learnt before, because of the excess of its manifestation and the weakness of our eyes in perceiving Him. Therefore the aspect of His veiling is His very clarity and manifestation. The same principle holds true for all of the knowledge of the reality of a cause vis-à-vis the knowledge of the reality of its effect. By the same token, the knowledge of the reality of every substance is more intense than the knowledge of the reality of every accident, and it is more prime and prior than the knowledge of the reality of the accident whose existence depends on this substance. *Asfār*, I, 3, pp. 383–384

Ṣadrā asserts the same point with a slightly different argument, using this time God's absolute existence and independence. Just as God's existence does not depend on things other than Himself, His omniscience holds a similar ontological superiority in encapsulating every possible object of knowledge:

> …in reality, knowledge of something is its very existence but this is one of the most mysterious problems of metaphysics, which no one understands except those who have attained the station of perfection. We shall explain this for you when, God willing, we analyze God's knowledge. As for that which is not in need of a cause and sustainer, its knowledge is either primarily evident or hidden from its own knowledge or there is no way of affirming it except by demonstration through its effects and concomitants in which case the very essence of its truth and quiddity remains unknown. But the

> Necessary Being has no proof, no definition and therefore no reason from a number of different points of view. It has no reason for existence like an active [agent] and ultimate goal, no reason for constitution (*al-qiwām*) like matter and form and no reason for quiddity like genus and differentia. In spite of this, nothing is hidden from It and It is the proof of everything and closest to everything as He the Exalted said: 'And we are closer to you than your jugular vein' (Qur'ān 50:16). And He said: 'And He is with you wherever you are' (Qur'ān 57:4). And He is the proof of His own Essence as He said: 'God testifies that there is no god but He' (Qur'ān 3:18). He also said: 'Is your Lord not sufficient [as a proof] that He is a witness to all things' (Qur'ān 41:53) and 'Say: What is greater as witness? Say: Allah' (Qur'ān 6:19). *Asfār*, I, 3, pp. 399–400

The second argument that Ṣadrā advances is knowledge-by-presence, which he considers to be the only way to avoid the 'pernicious results' (*umūr shanī'ah*)[222] of the representational theory of knowledge. The gist of the argument is that God knows things through their 'presence' in His all-inclusive knowledge: 'God knows His Essence and all things from His Own Essence.'[223] This, however, does not mean to say that they 'become' present in God's knowledge because their presence depends on God as the Necessary Being. Rather, God's *knowledge* of things is their very *existence* and presence. God's knowledge is an ontologically generative act by which God creates things by 'knowing' them. It is not the case that God first thinks things as *potentialities* and then grants them existence, for there is no potentiality in God. As mentioned before, such a claim would reverse the ontological relationship between God and His creation. Instead of denoting God as coming to know things, we should look at His knowledge as a generative act toward creation.

> Whoever attempts to prove His knowledge of things through one of his creations (*maj'ūlātihi*) such as the intellect and the soul, or says that His detailed knowledge is posterior to his Essence, this is due to the imperfection of his vision and weakness of his knowledge. The person who is deep in philosophy in our opinion is the person

> who proves His knowledge of all things with their multiplicity and detail in His Essence which is prior to all concomitants and external beings without there being any change in His Essence. *Asfār*, III, 1, pp. 248–249

Ṣadrā's argument that God's knowledge of things is their very existence is based on his ontology on the one hand, and knowledge-by-presence, on the other. The simple syllogism that Ṣadrā adopts reveals the weight of his gradational ontology: God knows things through His Essence and His Essence is never absent to Himself; therefore God knows things essentially, primarily and hence without time interval. That is why Ṣadrā does not find even Suhrawardī's 'illuminative relation' (*iḍāfah ishrāqiyyah*) convincing to explain God's relation to objects of His knowledge. The principle of illuminative relation, which Ṣadrā endorses for other types of relational knowledge, still assumes a relationship of some kind and allows separation whereas God can never be absent from Himself and from His knowledge.[224] Ṣadrā reiterates the notion of presence and sums up his argument by returning to knowledge-by-presence.

> There is nothing firmer and stronger than our knowledge of ourselves because our self-knowledge is our very essence. And nothing can be established for something more firmly than for itself. Therefore our knowledge of the source of ourselves and in fact the source of our existence goes back to the Necessary Being. As we have explained before, only the Necessary Being itself can have the knowledge of the reality of the Necessary Being. As He said: 'And they do not compass Him with their knowledge and all faces are humbled before the Living and the Self-Subsisting' (Qur'ān 20:110–111).
>
> Some of the *fuqarā'*[225] have found a solution for this problem but the expressions fall short of stating it in a manner that it deserves because of the subtlety of its path and secrecy of its route. Nevertheless, we point to it by saying that our self-knowledge is the existence of ourselves, and therefore the knowledge of the source of ourselves, on which our self-knowledge depends, is the existence of this source. This does not refer to our own existence but to the

existence of the source, which is the source itself. Its reality, however, does not depend on us because the existence of the effect depends on the existence of the cause, not its own existence. The same holds true for two kinds of knowledge because they are like the two kinds of existence. When our self-knowledge comes from the knowledge of our source, our knowledge of our source is the existence of our source. When the relation of our source to us is a relation of creation (*al-ījād*) and activity (*al-fā'iliyyah*), our knowledge of our source consists of the existence of our source together with its relation of creation and activity to us. Our knowledge of our source thus precedes our self-knowledge for it is prior to us through its creative agency.

In short, the scale of knowledge is just like the scale of existence in terms of strength and weakness and cause and effect. Things have their existence in their caused essences but their existence in their source and cause is stronger than their own existence in themselves. Something exists in its creator more firmly than in itself because its self-existence is only contingent whereas its existence in the creator is necessary. Thus the relation of necessity is stronger than the relation of contingency and everything has an existence in [their] universal source in a manner more supreme and nobler than anything else. As it is said in the prayer of the Prophet, may the most perfect benedictions be upon him and his family: 'O He who was an existent and self-existing before all existence and self-existing after all existence! O He who existentiates all existence!' *Asfār*, I, 3, pp. 400–403

In short, Ṣadrā follows Suhrwardi's insight that it is only by placing God before things and within an ontological hierarchy that we can save God's unity and omniscience *at the same time*. Couched in the language of existence, the question becomes one of relating the 'eternal' (*qadīm*), God, to the 'temporally created' (*ḥadīth*) which comprises everything other than God (*mā siw'Allāh*). Since God's knowing is a generative act, His knowledge of temporally created beings is the same as their existence. For Ṣadrā, this is enough of a proof for the absence of any duality in God's mode of knowing.

NOTES

1. *Asfār*, I, 1, p. 27. Cf. Ibn Sīnā, *Shifā', Ilāhiyyāt*, p. 29. Al-Fārābī uses the term *markūzah fī'l-dhin*. al-Fārābī, *'Uyūn al-masā'il* in *al-Majmū,'* p. 65.
2. *Asfār*, I, 1, p. 83. Cf. also *Sharḥ*, Vol. I, pp. 66 and 101.
3. *The Metaphysics of Sabzawari*, tr. M. Mohaghegh and T. Izutsu, (New York: Caravan Books, 1977), pp. 31–32.
4. *Asfār*, I, 1, p. 25.
5. *Asfār*, I, 1, p. 25.
6. *Asfār*, I, 1, p. 26.
7. *Asfār*, I, 1, p. 26. The meaning of Ṣadrā's statement that 'whatever has no definition has no proof' is that any reality defying definition needs no proof or demonstration for its 'why-ness' (*limma*) but itself is a proof for others. The idea goes back to the Muslim Peripatetics. Cf. al-Fārābī, *'Uyūn al-masā'il* in *al-Majmū'*, p. 67 and Ibn Sīnā *Shifā', Ilāhiyyāt*, p. 29. It is also in this sense that Ṣadrā says that 'existence has no purpose beyond itself and it is the ultimate agent of all agents, the form of all forms, and the aim of all aims. Hence it is the ultimate aim and *khayr al-maḥḍ* in which all realities come to an end.' *Asfār*, I, 1, p. 54; also p. 340.
8. *Kitāb al-mashā'ir*, p. 24. *Shuhūd 'aynī* can also be translated as 'essential seeing' if we take *'ayn* to mean to be the essence of something.
9. *Asfār*, I, 1, p. 49.
10. *Asfār*, I, 1, p. 37.
11. Cf. *Asfār*, I, 1, pp. 44–46. See also the short discussion of this point in Ṣadrā's *Qudsiyyah*, pp. 207–208.
12. Cf. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1003 a, and Ibn Sīnā, *Najāt*, p. 235.
13. *Asfār* I, 1, p. 24. For a similar statement, see *Sharḥ*, Vol. I, p. 16 where Ṣadrā uses the term 'the science of disembodied beings' (*fann al-mufāraqāt*) to describe the study of existence as an absolute term.
14. Ṣadrā, *Asfār* I, 1, p. 24. Although Ṣadrā uses the word *mawjūd* which is 'existent' rather than existence, it gives the meaning of existence in this context because, as Zanjānī points out in his commentary on this phrase (*Asfār*, I, 1, p. 24, note 2), Ṣadrā employs the words *wujūd* and *mawjūd* interchangeably in some cases. Moreover, both words give the same meaning for the real existent, i.e., the 'thing that really exists' (*al-mawjūd al-ḥaqīqī*) is ultimately nothing but existence (*wujūd*): 'The existent is existence and its modes (*aṭwār*), affairs (*shu'ūn*) and modalities (*anḥā'*).' *Asfār*, I, 2, p. 341. We find a similar usage in Bahmanyār who says that 'the subject-matter of this science is the general matter that includes all things, and it is the existent-qua-existent, i.e., existence (*al-wujūd*)'; *Kitāb al-taḥṣīl*, p. 279.

15. W. V. Quine, 'On What There Is' *Review of Metaphysics*, 2 (1948), reprinted in E. D. Klemke (ed.), *Contemporary Analytic and Linguistic Philosophies* (New York: Prometheus Books, 1983), p. 385. For Rorty's pragmatist vindication of the same point, see his *Consequences of Pragmatism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), pp. xiv–xxi.
16. *Asfār*, I, 1, p. 54.
17. Cf. *Metaphysics*, 1003a.
18. Kenny, *Mystical Monotheism*, p. 6.
19. Charles H. Kahn, 'Why Existence Does not Emerge as a Distinct Concept in Greek Philosophy', in Parviz Morewedge (ed.), *Philosophies of Existence: Ancient and Medieval* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1982), p. 15.
20. *Metaphysics*, 1028 a.
21. *Asfār*, I, 1, p. 258.
22. Kahn, 'Why Existence….', p. 7.
23. For Ibn Sīnā, see *Shifā', Ilāhiyyāt*, Vol. II, pp. 344 and 347.
24. At this point, the two meanings of the word *māhiyyah* should be explained. '*Māhiyyah* in the particular sense' (*māhiyyah bi'l-ma'nā al-akhaṣṣ*) is the answer to the question 'what is it?' (*mā hiya?*). In Ibn Sīnā's terms (*Shifā'*, *Ilāhiyyāt*, p. 31), this meaning of quiddity denotes the particular reality of something. '*Māhiyyah* in the general sense' (*māhiyyah bi'l-ma'nā al-'āmm*) is that by which a thing is what it is (*mā bihi al-shay huwa huwa*). The second meaning of *māhiyyah* is eventually nothing other than the existence of something. The first meaning, which concerns the logical essence, is usually translated as 'quiddity' to distinguish it from 'essence' in the general and ontological sense. Cf. Toshihiko Izutsu, *The Concept and Reality of Existence*, (Tokyo: Keio Institute of Cultural and Linguistic Studies, 1971), p. 75.
25. *Asfār*, I, 1, pp. 55–56, 61.
26. *Asfār*, I, 1, p. 46.
27. *Asfār*, I, 1, p. 54.
28. *Asfār*, I, 1, p. 53; cf. also, p. 55 and 61.
29. *Asfār*, I, 1, p. 259.
30. Cf. *Asfār*, I, 1, p. 59.
31. *Asfār*, I, 1, p. 61.
32. *Asfār*, I, 1, p. 65.
33. *Asfār*, I, 1, p. 65.
34. *Aṣālah* in *Majmū'ah*, p. 190.
35. *Asfār*, I, 1, pp. 38–39.
36. *Shifā'*, *Ilāhiyyāt*, p. 38. Cf. also David B. Burrell, *Knowing the Unknowable God: Ibn-Sīnā, Maimonides, Aquinas* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1986), pp. 24–25.

37. As a representative of the school of Ibn Sīnā, consider the following remarks by Bahmanyār: 'The particularization of every existent is through its attribution to its subject. In other words, it subsists through its attribution to its subject and cause; not that the attribution is attached to it from outside. The *existence* of the caused (*al-ma'lūl*) is an *accident* (*'araḍ*) and every accident subsists through its existence in its subject. The same holds true for existence as the *existence* of man, for instance, subsists through its *attribution to* man and the *existence* of Zayd subsists through its *attribution to* Zayd'. *al-Taḥṣīl*, p. 282. (Emphases added). Ṣadrā quotes a paraphrased version of Bahmanyar's statement in *Qudsiyyah*, p. 207.
38. Ibn Sīnā, *Mubāḥathāt*, ed. Muḥsīn Bīdāfar (Qom, Iran: Intishārāt-i Bīdār, AH 1413), p. 154.
39. For Ibn Rushd's objections against Ibn Sīnā, see his *Tahāfut al-tahāfut*, ed. Sulaymān Dunyā', (Cairo, Egypt: 1964), vol. II, p. 80; English tr. Van den Bergh *The Incoherence of the Incoherence*, (London: Luzac, 1978), p. 118. St. Thomas followed Ibn Rushd and criticized Ibn Sīnā through the eyes of this misreading. Cf. St. Thomas Aquinas, *On Being and Essence*, tr. A. Maurer, (Toronto: The Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1983). Etienne Gilson follows the Thomistic interpretation of Ibn Sīnā on this particular point in his *Being and Some Philosophers*, (Toronto: The Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1952), p. 52 and *History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages*, (London: Sheed and Ward, 1989), pp. 190–191. See also F. Rahman, 'Essence and Existence in Avicenna,' *Mediaeval and Renaissance Studies*, IV (1958), 1–16 and P. Morewedge, 'Philosophical Analysis and Ibn Sīnā's 'Essence-Existence' Distinction' *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 92.3 (1972), pp. 425–435.
40. *Asfār*, I, 1, p. 48. In another place, however, Ṣadrā attributes the view of existence as an accident to Ibn Sīnā and his followers, and rejects it as being 'utterly far from the truth.' Cf. *Asfār*, I, 1, p. 258
41. *Asfār*, I, 1, p. 49.
42. *Asfār*, I, 1, p. 252.
43. *Asfār*, I, 1, pp. 54–55.
44. *Asfār*, I, 1, pp. 40, 48. Cf. also Mehdi Aminrazavi, *Suhrawardī and the School of Illumination*, 33–35.
45. After saying that existence realizes itself by itself, Ṣadrā makes some cautionary remarks. The potentially dangerous idea is the following: If the realization of existence depends on itself, then one may object that existence assumes a status similar to the Necessary Being (*wājib al-wujūd*). Ṣadrā replies by saying that 'the meaning of the Necessary Being is that it necessitates its own existence and reality by itself without being in need of any active agent and performer whereas the meaning of the realization of existence by itself is that when it is realized, it is either by

itself like the Necessary Being or through an active agent whose realization is not in need of another existence by which it subsists. This realization takes place only after the effect of the agent with its existence and its qualification with existence.' *Asfār*, I, 1, pp. 40–41

46. *Asfār*, I, 1, p. 40.
47. *Asfār*, I, 1, pp. 250–251.
48. *Asfār*, I, 1, p. 59.
49. *Asfār*, I, 1, p. 61. See also Ṭabaṭabā'i's footnote on page 49.
50. *Asfār*, I, 1, p. 41; also p. 120.
51. *Asfār*, I, 1, p. 66; also p. 57.
52. This principle finds an interesting expression in Sabzawarī's *Sharḥ al-manẓūmah* (Qom, Iran: Nāb Publications, 1995), Vol. II, p. 60, where he says that 'existence is the source of all explanations in which all descriptions come to an end. And it is the source of all sources and descriptions. When the Prophet, may peace and blessing be upon him, was asked 'by what did you know your Lord?' he replied that 'I knew everything by Him.''
53. The same position is held in modern philosophy. Cf. John E. Smith, 'Is Existence a Valid Philosophical Concept?' in his *Reason and God* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1961), p. 122.
54. Toshihiko Izutsu, *The Concept and Reality of Existence*, p. 3.
55. al-Fārābī, *al-Masā'il al-mutafarriqah*, ed. F. Dieterici, (Leiden, 1890), p. 90 and *Jawābāt* in *Risālatān falsafiyyatān*, p. 91. See also N. Rescher, 'al-Fārābī on the Question: Is Existence a Predicate?' in *Studies in the History of Arabic Logic*, (University of Pittsburgh Press, 1963), pp. 39–42 and 'The Concept of Existence in Arabic Logic and Philosophy' in *Studies in Arabic Philosophy*, (University of Pittsburgh Press, 1966), pp. 69–80.
56. *Asfār*, I., 1, pp. 36–37.
57. Fazlur Rahman translates *tashkīk* as 'systematic ambiguity' (*The Philosophy of Mullā Ṣadrā*, p. 11), which I find to be ambiguous. The meaning of *tashkīk* is quite clear in Ṣadrā's writings: it refers to any order of hierarchy and gradation in terms of priority and posteriority, cause and effect, intensification and diminution, and so on. In the case of existence, it refers to the various degrees, states, modes and levels of existence. Hence my choice of gradation for *tashkīk*.
58. Compare the following paragraph: 'Know that existence is predicated of what is under it equivocally, not univocally. This means that an existence that has no cause precedes by nature an existence that has a cause. By the same token, the existence of substances precedes the existence of accidents. Similarly, some beings are stronger and some weaker. One cannot say that existence is a generic term predicated, for instance, of the existence of man, donkey, and stars univocally like the colors yellow and red. As you shall learn, some things are prior to others, and the meaning of this is that the existence (*wujūd*) of those things is prior to

the existence of other things; not that thing-ness (*al-jismiyyah*) itself is prior to thing-ness. Therefore when we say that cause is prior to effect, it means that its existence is prior to the existence of the effect.' Bahmanyār, *al-Taḥṣīl*, p. 281.

59. This reference to Bahmanyār is indicative of Ṣadrā's familiarity with his work, especially *al-Taḥṣīl*. Bahmanyār was certainly more lucid than his master Ibn Sīnā in articulating key Peripatetic positions, and Ṣadrā quotes freely and at some length from his work. Cf. *Asfār*, I, 1, p. 39 and 48 where Ṣadrā presents Bahmanyār's view of the 'actuality of existence' as concurring with the primacy of existence.
60. A reference to Suhrawardī as it is repeated also in *Asfār*, III, 1, p. 181. It is in more than one place that Ṣadrā refers to Suhrawardī as a 'Stoic' (*riwāqī*). Cf. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 291. For a discussion of Suhrawardī's 'Stoicism,' see Walbridge, *The Leaven of the Ancients*, pp. 187–190.
61. I translate *wijdān* as an existential state of consciousness to bring out the etymological connection between *wujūd* and *wijdān*, both of which come from the Arabic root *w-j-d* meaning to 'find' and 'to be found.' It is sometimes translated into Persian by the classical authors as *yāftan*, 'finding,' a word which is also used to translate *wujūd*. Cf. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, p. 214. The word *wajd*, which can be translated as 'ecstasy,' comes from the same root. The implied meaning is that 'finding' existence results in a state of ecstasy. Together with Ibn al-'Arabi, we can also say that existence is found in a state of ecstasy.
62. Cf. Franz Rosenthal, *Knowledge Triumphant: The Concept of Knowledge in Medieval Islam* (Leiden, Holland: E. J. Brill, 1970), pp. 48–49.
63. Cf. *Asfār*, I, 1, p. 114.
64. *Aṣālah* in *Majmū'ah*, p. 182.
65. Cf. *Shawāhid*, p. 14.
66. Cf. *Ḥudūth*, pp. 177–8 where Ṣadrā the Platonist gives a short defense of the Platonic Forms. As Sabzawarī points out, the word 'form' (*al-ṣūrah*) has two meanings. One is the form in the Aristotelian sense, i.e., that to which abstracted concepts correspond in the representational theory of knowledge (*al-'ilm al-ḥuṣūlī*). The second meaning is 'essence' but not in the sense of quiddity (*māhiyyah*) as an abstraction of the mind but in the sense of concrete essences that belong to the intelligible world. See *Asfār*, III, p. 284, note 3. See also Fazlur Rahman, *The Philosophy of Mullā Ṣadrā*, p. 214.
67. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 304.
68. *Asfār*, I, 1, p. 36.
69. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 321.
70. 'The mental form of something could be nobler than its external reality,' *Kāshāniyyah* in *Majmū'ah*, p. 131.
71. Cf. Aristotle's discussion of substantial forms as universal (*Metaphysics*, XII, 1034–1035). See also Ibn Sīnā, *Najāt* pp. 207–209 where he

discusses perception (*idrāk*) in relation to the 'classes of disembodiment' (*aṣnāf al-tajrīd*). The same theme is taken up in the *Shifā'*; see *Avicenna's De Anima,* pp. 58–60.

72. Ṣadrā applies the same principle to the knower: one has to be detached from the limitations of material existence in order to perceive intelligible forms. This is where Ṣadrā gracefully blends philosophical speculation with the purification of the soul. As he states in various aphorisms, one cannot unite with the intelligible world, the ultimate goal of philosophy, without disengaging oneself from the gross states of existence. Matter is an obstacle for the soul to unite with the intelligible world through the agency of the active intellect. Cf. Ṣadrā's remarks in *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 369. I shall discuss this issue in greater detail in the next chapter.
73. *Sharḥ*, Vol. I, p. 81.
74. *Metaphysics*, 1087b where he says that 'the statement that all knowledge is universal, so that the principles of things must also be universal and not separate substances, presents indeed, of all the points we have mentioned, the greatest difficulty.' Cf. Edward Booth, *Aristotelian Aporetic Ontology in Islamic and Christian Thinkers* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 5–6.
75. Ibn Sīnā, *Najāt*, p. 210.
76. Cf. L. E. Goodman, *Avicenna*, pp. 129–131.
77. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 286.
78. *Asfār*, I, 3, pp. 343–344. See also Bāqillānī who places the potential in the category of non-existence. *Kitāb al-tawḥīd*, pp. 34–44, quoted in Rosenthal, *Knowledge Triumphant*, p. 216. Perfection as actuality is the common wisdom of medieval philosophy. Thus Thomas Aquinas says that '…a thing is said to be perfect in proportion to its actuality.' Cf. *Summa Theologica*, Part I, Question 4, Article, 1.
79. St. Anselm's argument that God as the Most Perfect Being must exist rather than not because perfection implies existence is based on the same intuition of the Neoplatonists about the 'metaphysics of actuality.'
80. *Asfār*, II, 2, p. 67. The other term Ṣadrā uses more frequently is *al-qābiliyyah*; *Asfār*, II, 2, p. 70.
81. William Charlton has argued against the notion of prime matter in Aristotle. Charlton's criticism of the conventional readings of Aristotle on this issue merits serious consideration for prime matter signifies 'an ultimate indeterminate matter, to be discovered by conceptual analysis,' which goes against the central concern of Aristotle's quest for metaphysics of actual substances. For Charlton's discussion, see his 'Did Aristotle Believe in Prime Matter?' in *Aristotle's Physics Books I and II* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1970), pp. 129–145.
82. Cf. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 434.
83. Cf. also *Sharḥ*, Vol. I, p. 40.

84. Ṣadrā says that a substance whose form is not disengaged from matter cannot be known since matter means 'darkness' and thus ignorance as opposed to 'light' and 'presence,' which signifies knowledge. Cf. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 387 and IV, 1, p. 69.
85. *Maẓāhir*, p. 88.
86. Cf. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 340.
87. Cf. *Shawāhid*, p. 205.
88. See also *Shawāhid*, pp. 156–162 for Ṣadrā's detailed discussion of Platonic Forms. Ṣadrā's Platonic Forms are real individuals: '…for every existent, he (Plato) established an individual (*shakhṣan*) in the divine world and called these individuals the Platonic Forms.' *Ḥudūth*, p. 177.
89. *Shawāhid*, p. 239.
90. Plotinus offers a rigorous analysis of this point. Cf. Kenney, *Mystical Monotheism*, p. 104. For a fuller exposition and defense of 'axiarchism,' see John Leslie, *Value and Existence*, (New Jersey, 1979).
91. *Asfār*, I, 3, pp. 324–325 and *Ittiḥād* in *Majmū'ah*, pp. 93–94. See also *Asfār*, I, 2, p. 368; I, 3, p. 338; II, 2, pp. 216–218 where Ṣadrā traces the idea back to Plato; and III, 1, p. 110 where the principle is applied to God's knowledge of things.
92. Cf. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 373.
93. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 377.
94. Like Ibn Sīnā, Ṣadrā uses disembodiment as a criterion for the division of the subject-matter of metaphysics. Cf. *Sharḥ*, Vol I, pp. 69–70.
95. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 362 and also 416.
96. *Muqarrabūn* refers to Angels, Prophets and saints, who are described in the Qur'ān as being closest to the Divine. Cf. the Qur'ān 4:172, 7:114, 26: 42, 56:11, and 83:21.
97. Ibn Sīnā attributes this saying to an unknown figure whereas Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī attributes it to Aristotle. Cf. Ibn Sīnā, *Shifā'*, *Manṭiq*, p. 22 and Ṭūsī, *Asās al-iqtibās*, ed. Taqī Mudarris Raḍwah (Tehran, Iran: Dānishgāh-i Tehrān, 1988), p. 375.
98. *Asfār*, III, 1, pp. 335–336. Cf. also *Asfār*, IV, 1, pp. 163–164.
99. The same criticism of Suhrawardī is repeated in *Asfār*, IV, 1, p. 26.
100. *Tajarrud* is a notoriously difficult term to translate. The root verb *j-r-d* means to denude, strip and divest. As a technical term, it refers to a state where things are 'freed from the limitations of material existence.' The English word 'abstraction' works only in some contexts where *tajarrud* means to isolate something from some other things such as its accidental properties. Cf. Ibn Sīnā, *Najāt*, pp. 205–210; Rahman, *Avicenna's Psychology*, pp. 35–42. Ghazālī also uses the term in this sense. Cf. Farid Jabre, *Essai sur le lexique de Ghazālī* (Beyrouth, Lebanon: Publications de L'Université Libanaise, 1970), p. 52. But 'abstraction' falls short of conveying the intended meaning of 'immaterial reality' especially if it is understood as the opposite of 'concrete.' A *mujarrad* being is not

necessarily something that exists as an abstraction in the mind. It can be a concrete reality as in the case of God, the angels or the intellect. For Ṣadrā, such a being is more real and concrete than physical substances. For this meaning of *tajarrud* in Ṣadrā, see *Asfār*, I, 3, pp. 360–366. The Latin translations of Ibn Sīnā's works use two words for *tajarrud*: *abstractio* and *denudata*. Goichon rightly translates *tajarrud* as 'l'état de non-mélange avec la matiére'. Cf. Goichon, *Lexique*, p. 38. Ibn Sīnā uses it in this sense when he says that *mujarradāt* are intrinsically intelligible because they are freed from the limitations of material existence. Cf. *al-Mabda' wa'l-ma'ād*, pp. 15 and 96. In contemporary scholarship, the word *tajarrud* and its derivations have been translated variously. Abstraction is the most common term. See Rahman, *The Philosophy of Mullā Ṣadrā*, pp. 211 and 233–234. Given the problems with the word 'abstraction' as something that is less than real, I think the word *denudata* comes closer to *tajarrud* especially in the sense in which Ṣadrā uses it. I have kept abstraction when *tajarrud* is used in the Peripatetic sense. Where appropriate, I have used disengagement when *tajarrud* means denuding and separating something from others. In general, I have translated it as disembodiment especially when Ṣadrā uses it in accordance with the gradation (*tashkīk*) of existence.

101. *Asfār*, I, 3, pp. 284–285.
102. *Asfār*, I, 3, pp. 286–287.
103. *Sharḥ*, Vol. I, pp. 618–619.
104. *Asfār*, I, 3, pp. 278, 297, and 317.
105. This Qur'ānic verse, as interpreted by Ṣadrā and other philosophers, is also an allusion to the generative power of God's knowledge of things: Divine knowledge of things is their very existence. Cf. Suhrawardī, *Kitāb al-mashāri' wa'l-muṭāraḥāt*, Vol. I, p. 488.
106. *Asfār*, I, 3, pp. 451 and 465.
107. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 292.
108. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, tr. G. E. M. Anscombe (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1968), par. 246.
109. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 186; also p. 79.
110. al-Rāzī, *Mabāḥith*, Vol. I, p. 450.
111. *Sharḥ*, Vol. I, p. 569.
112. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 291.
113. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 345.
114. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 346.
115. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 309.
116. 'The higher genuses are actual essences (*dhātiyyāt*) for their species and individuals. Actual essences cannot change their mode of existence otherwise an actual essence would not be itself.' *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 311
117. al-Rāzī, *Mabāḥith*, Vol. I, p. 458.
118. *Sharḥ*, Vol. I, p. 571.

119. The paragraph is taken verbatim from al-Rāzī's *Mabāḥith*, Vol. I, p. 459 without any reference. On the same theme, see *Asfār*, I, 1, pp. 287, 289, 311; Rahman, *The Philosophy of Mullā Ṣadrā*, pp. 215–216.
120. Rahman gives a minimalist interpretation of Ṣadrā when he says that the soul '…creates forms from within itself or, rather, *is* these forms. This is the meaning of the identity of thought and being.' *The Philosophy of Mullā Ṣadrā*, p. 213. He seems to correct (or contradict?) himself two pages later (p. 215) when he describes the forms the soul knows as 'exist(ing) in their own right in a Platonic sense.'
121. *Sharḥ*, Vol. I, p. 596.
122. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 360; *Sharḥ*, Vol. I, p. 613.
123. *Sharḥ*, Vol. I, p. 617.
124. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 463. For a similar example, see *Shawāhid*, p. 246.
125. Ṣadrā mentions 'eight aspects' to state the difference between the 'presence of perceptual forms in the soul and their actual reality in matter.' Cf. *Asfār*, I, 3, pp. 300–304. The first five are taken almost verbatim from al-Rāzī's *al-Mabāḥith*, Vol. I, pp. 453–454.
126. *Sharḥ*, Vol. I, p. 601.
127. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 307.
128. *Sharḥ*, Vol. I, p. 585.
129. *Taṣawwur,* p. 59. The same theme is developed in *Asfār*, 8, 221 and 9, 56.
130. *Sharḥ*, Vol. I, p. 605.
131. Reading *taf'alu* as *ta'aqqalu*, which makes more sense in this context.
132. *Sharḥ*, Vol. I, pp. 575–576.
133. *Sharḥ*, Vol. I, p. 581. This is an obvious reference to al-Rāzī who uses the word *ḥulūl* for the presence of intelligible forms in the mind and in the external world. Cf. *al-Mabāḥith*, p. 453. By contrast, Ṣadrā uses the words *ḥuḍūr* and *ḥuṣūl*.
134. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 382.
135. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 346.
136. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 297.
137. Cf. *Mashā'ir*, pp. 54–58 where Ṣadrā reiterates his view that God's names and qualities are not attributes *added* to His essence *a posteriori* but different modes and states of His Essence which is not affected by His self-conscious and voluntary delimitation through His own names, qualities, and acts.
138. Cf. Ibn Sīnā, *Najāt*, pp. 207–210.
139. The hierarchical view of perception leads Ṣadrā to divide knowing subjects into three classes: the 'sensate man' (*al-insān al-ḥissī*) perceives only sensible objects; the 'imaginal man' (*al-insān al-khayālī*) perceives sensible objects and imaginal forms; and finally the 'intellective man' (*al-insān al-'aqlī*) perceives the first two as well as intelligible forms as disembodied substances. Cf. *Sharḥ*, Vol. I, pp. 614–615

140. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 360.
141. Cf. Ibn Sīnā, *Najāt*, pp. 208–209 where Ibn Sīnā emphasizes that the imaginal faculty does not need matter to retain forms. For Rahman's English translation, see *Avicenna's Pscychology*, pp. 39–40. See also Rahman, *Avicenna's De Anima*, pp. 59–60 and A. M. Goichon, *Lexique*, pp. 442–444.
142. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 360 and IV, 1, pp. 211–212. In the *Mafātiḥ*, Vol. I, p. 181, Ṣadrā rejects the suggestion of some Peripatetic philosophers that all of the imaginal forms conjured up by the soul belong to the *'ālam al-khayāl*. Evil and satanic feelings, images and thoughts are creations of the soul, not illuminations from the world of imagination.
143. Ibn al-'Arabī uses the word *barzakh* in a wider sense and applies it to any intermediary state. Cf. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, pp. 117–118.
144. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 362.
145. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 361. Cf. *Shawāhid*, pp. 208–209.
146. See also *Asfār*, III, 1, p. 258.
147. Cf. *Sharḥ*, Vol. I, pp. 617–618.
148. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 368.
149. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 369.
150. See *Asfār*, I, 3, pp. 374–375 where Ṣadrā quotes from Suhrawardī's *al-Mashār'i wa'l-muṭaraḥāt*.
151. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 376.
152. *Sharḥ*, Vol. I, p. 615.
153. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 498.
154. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 380.
155. *De Anima*, 405b.
156. Cf. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1087.
157. Cf. Goodman, *Avicenna*, p. 136.
158. Ibn Sīnā, *Najāt*, p. 210.
159. *Asfār*, I, 3, pp. 296, 316–317, and 385.
160. Suhrawardī, *al-Mashāri' wa'l-muṭāraḥāt*, p. 485.
161. *Asfār*, III, 1, p. 162.
162. *Asfār*, IV, 2, p. 144.
163. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 365.
164. *Asfār*, I, 3, pp. 418–427.
165. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 434.
166. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 462.
167. *Asfār*, I, 3, 461. Cf. Ṣadrā's treatment of the active intellect as an active agent for the soul, *Asfār*, IV, 2, pp. 140–144.
168. *Kitāb al-ḥudūd* in Kennedy-Day, *Books of Definition*, p. 104.
169. *Shawāhid*, p. 245.

170. Cf. Ṣadrā's quote from Ibn Sīnā, *Asfār*, I, 1, p. 419. Along the same lines, Ibn Sīnā defines the active intellect as 'a formal substance.' Cf. *Kitāb al-ḥudūd* in Kennedy-Day, *Books of Definition*, p. 103.
171. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 510.
172. *Asfār*, II, 2, p. 204.
173. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 326; see also p. 461. This view belongs in essence to Ibn Sīnā. Cf. *Shifā', Ilāhiyyāt*, p. 414; and *Najāt*, p. 231. See also Herbert A. Davidson, *AlFārābī, Avicenna, and Averroes on Intellect*, pp. 78 and 91.
174. *Asfār*, III, 2, p. 276.
175. *Asfār*, III, 2, p. 278.
176. *Asfār*, IV, 1, p. 398 where Ṣadrā cites three reasons why the active intellect has been called 'active.'
177. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 339.
178. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 127. The verse is from Qur'ān 74: 31. In another place, Ṣadrā says that what the philosophers call the active intellect in the language of theoretical wisdom is called the 'sacred spirit' in the language of the Sharī'ah. *Asfār*, III, 2, p. 24.
179. *Asfār*, IV, 2, p. 130. See also *Ḥudūth*, p. 139 where the Platonic Forms are treated as the contents of the Divine mind.
180. Ibn Sīnā, *Mubāḥathāt*, p. 107.
181. Cf. also *Asfār*, I, 3, pp. 443–446.
182. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 516.
183. Lit. 'bringing out.' A reference to a branch of the science of *ḥadīth* where one investigates the sources of a particular narration.
184. Cf. *Avicanna's De Anima*, p. 239.
185. Ibn Sīnā, *Mubāḥathāt*, p. 107.
186. *Najāt*, p. 206. Cf. *Avicenna's De Anima*, pp. 249–250. See also Peter Heath, *Allegory and Philosophy in Avicenna* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992), pp. 87–89. For the translation of relevant material on intuition in the Avicennan corpus, see Gutas, *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition*, pp. 159–176. See also Gutas, 'Intuition and Thinking: The Evolving Structure of Avicenna's Epistemology' in Robert Wisnowsky (ed.), *Aspects of Avicenna*, (Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2001), pp. 1–38.
187. *Asfār*, I, 3, pp. 322–324 where Ṣadrā quotes the relevant sections of the *Shifā'*. Interestingly enough, the expression 'poetic metaphors' has been used by Aristotle to refer to the Platonic *eidos*. Cf. Taylor, *Aristotle*, p. 32. al-Rāzī concurs with Aristotle in *Mabāḥith*, Vol. I, p. 459.
188. Quoted in Kennedy-Day, *Books of Definition*, p. 23.
189. *Asfār*, I, 3, pp. 89–90. Cf. Rahman, *The Philosophy of Mullā Ṣadrā*, pp. 99–100. I have dealt with this particular problem in Ṣadrā's natural philosophy in my 'Between Physics and Metaphysics: Mullā Ṣadrā on Nature and Motion' *Islam and Science* Vol. I, 2003, pp. 65–93.

190. Essential primary predication refers to predication where the predicate is an essential part of the definition of the subject. In this kind of predication, subject and predicate are one and the same both in concept and in reality. Existential propositions such as 'man is man' are of this kind. Although existential propositions are tautological and yield no new knowledge about the predicate, they play an important role in logic. Having said that, essential primary predications are also applied to such propositions as 'man is a rational animal' whereby 'rational animal' is essential for the definition of 'man.' The second kind of predication called 'common predication' (*ḥaml shāī‘ ṣinā‘ī*) or simply secondary predication (*ḥaml thānī*) refers to predication where the predicate is not an essential property of the subject. The proposition 'man is a writer' is of this kind in that being a writer is a quality shared by some human beings but not an essential part of the definition of man.
191. This is how Ṣadrā explains the multiple states of existence and consciousness in man: the human self is a simple substance that has the qualities of knowledge, volition, movement, hearing, sight, life, etc., all at once, and for Ṣadrā this is the best example of how a single being can take on multiple 'meanings,' i.e., modes and states of existence in a simple manner. Cf. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 326.
192. Ibn Sīnā's famous example is how water becomes air by 'shedding from its matter (*hayūlā*) the form of water-ness (*ṣūrat al-mā'iyyah*) and there comes about the form of air-ness (*ṣūrat al-hawā'iyyah*).' See the quote from the *Shifā'* in the *Asfār*, I, 3, pp. 327 and 329.
193. Unless specified by the context, the word *nafs* in Arabic means both self and soul. In his *Ma‘ārij al-quds fī madārij ma‘rifat al-nafs*, (Baghdād, Iraq: al-Maktabat al-‘Ālamiyyah, 1988), pp. 18–19, Ghazālī points out that the word *nafs* is used in the Qur'ān to refer to the human self as the heart (*al-qalb*), the spirit (*al-rūḥ*), and the intellect (*al-‘aql*).
194. In commenting on the gradual perfection of the human self from infancy to adulthood, Ṣadrā states that 'the souls of the prophets, peace be upon them, and the souls of the insane and the infants are of the same degree in the wombs of [their] mothers insofar as the human self and its reality is concerned. The difference is in the proximate accidents that are attached to their existence.' *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 328.
195. *Asfār*, I, 3, pp. 327 and 328.
196. *Shawāhid*, p. 211.
197. *Kāshāniyyah* in *Majmū‘ah*, p. 127.
198. *Kāshāniyyah* in *Majmū‘ah*, p. 128.
199. *Mubāḥathāt*, pp. 157–158.
200. *Mubāḥathāt*, pp. 155–156.
201. Gilbert Ryle, *The Concept of Mind* (Harmondsworth, UK, 1966), p. 160.
202. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 295.
203. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 291; and p. 378.

204. See also Amin Razavi, *Suhrawardī and the School of Illumination*, pp. 103–105.
205. Cf. also *Ḥikmat al-ishrāq*, p. 111 and *Partawnāma*, ed. and tr. Hossein Ziai as *The Book of Radiance* (Costa Mesa, CA: 1998), p. 39 where Suhrawardī says that 'any thing whose essence is absent from you, so you cannot perceive its essence, then you cannot [also] perceive its form.'
206. Wittgenstein's remarks on 'pain language' have led to the notorious 'private language argument' debate. The debate itself does not concern us here. It should be mentioned, however, that Wittgenstein's rejection of a private language knowable only to its speaker was an attack on Cartesian dualism on the one hand, and a reaffirmation of the primacy of language-games, on the other. On both ends, Wittgenstein's main concern is to show that even sense experience as our 'primitive' and natural encounter with the world is shaped by the rules of language. Accordingly, language is constitutive, not a mere instrument, of sensations. That is why Wittgenstein rejects the proposition 'Sensations are private' (*Philosophical Investigations*, par. 248) and insists that 'only of what behaves like a human being can one say that it *has* pains' (*Philosophical Investigations*, par. 283). If there is no such thing as a private language, then there is no such thing as private sensation either.
207. 'In what sense are my sensations *private*?—Well, only I can know whether I am really in pain; another person can only surmise it.—In one way this is wrong, and in another nonsense. If we are using the word 'to know' as it is normally used (and how else are we to use it?), then other people very often know when I am in pain.—Yes, but all the same not with the certainty with which I know it myself!—It can't be said of me at all (except perhaps as a joke) that I *know* I am in pain. What is it supposed to mean—except perhaps that I *am* in pain?' Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, par. 246.
208. Cf. Mahdi Ha'iri Yazdi, *The Principles of Epistemology in Islamic Philosophy: Knowledge by Presence* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), pp. 61–64.
209. Commenting on this paragraph, Sabzawārī has the following to say: 'That is, only through knowledge by presence. And this is possible only when we have the knowledge of the essence of something and its cause. Thus man's knowledge of the reality of existence (*ḥaqīqat al-wujūd*) can primarily be in his extinction in it (*bi'l-fanā' fīhi*).' *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 294, note 3. It is pertinent here to draw attention to Sabzawārī's use of the Sufi term *fanā'*, spiritual extinction, to explain the knowledge of existence through knowledge-by-presence.
210. The same theme is developed in Ṣadrā's *'Awīṣah*, pp. 26–28.
211. Cf. *Shawāhid*, pp. 242–243.
212. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 469.

213. *Kāshāniyyah* in *Majmū‘ah*, p. 130.
214. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 451.
215. For Ṣadrā's detailed criticism of the representational view of God's knowledge and his revision of the views of previous philosophers, see *Asfār*, III, 1, pp. 189–237.
216. *Najāt*, p. 283.
217. *Asfār*, III, 1, p. 181. For Ṣadrā's critique of Suhrawardī's position, see *Asfār*, III, 1, pp. 249–263.
218. *Asfār*, III, 1, pp. 180–181.
219. *Asfār*, I, 3, pp. 387–395.
220. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 397.
221. Here I deliberately adopted a literal translation to stress Ṣadrā's ontological concern: knowledge 'happens to someone' (*wuqū‘ al-‘ilm*) rather than is mentally acquired by the knowing subject. This unique vocabulary, which is at times admittedly difficult to follow, is a result of Ṣadrā's relentless effort to ground all knowledge in existence. Cf. also Ṣadrā's definition of perception as 'meeting' (*liqā'*) and 'arrival' (*wuṣūl*), *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 507.
222. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 317.
223. *Mashā‘ir*, p. 50.
224. *Asfār*, III, 1, pp. 256–261.
225. Ṣadrā's use of the word *fuqarā'*, plural of *faqīr* meaning poor and taken from the Qur'ān (35: 15), is not simply for stylistic reasons. It clearly alludes to a subtle point Ṣadrā wants to bring up within a Sufi context.

III

ṢADRĀ'S SYNTHESIS: KNOWLEDGE AS EXPERIENCE, KNOWLEDGE AS BEING

Within the Islamic philosophical tradition, two problems proved to be the most challenging for Ṣadrā: the critique of essentialism and the representational theory of knowledge. The 'polemical' aspect of Ṣadrā's thought centers, *inter alia*, around these two issues. The ultimate challenge of Ṣadrā's 'transcendent wisdom' is to formulate a being-centered metaphysics and apply it to the problems of traditional philosophy. The definition of knowledge as a mode of existence is an important application of this concern whereby Ṣadrā tries to overcome the dichotomy between the order of existence and the order of cognition. In contrast to the subjectivist tendencies of both classical Kalam and modern rationalism, Ṣadrā begins with existence as his starting point, and works his way back to the manner in which it unfolds itself in our knowing processes of sensation, imagination, estimation, and intellection. The mind as the locus of the *intelligibilia* and the world as representation are non-starters for a proper ontological analysis. The task at hand is to start out with existence and eventually end with it.

Ṣadrā's relentless effort to ground all knowledge in existence and its modalities has led some scholars to make comparisons between his thought and some trends in modern philosophy. Heidegger's revival of the question of existence is the first that comes to mind. Attempts have been made to bring out the similarities between Heidegger's *Dasein* and Ṣadrā's *wujūd*.[1] Although there are fundamental differences between the two,

Heidegger's attempt to overcome the misdeeds of modern epistemology, which he attributes to the Cartesian *cogito*, shares the main thrust of Ṣadrā's ambitious project to ground all cognition in existence. This is predicated upon Ṣadrā's oft-repeated premise that it is impossible to know existence from a purely epistemological point of view, for there is no way we can stand outside existence to know it 'objectively.' Nor can we see existence and its modalities from the standpoint of a 'world-less subject' who, then, looks at a 'subject-less world.'[2] Although starting with different premises and arriving at different conclusions, both Heidegger and Ṣadrā conclude that knowledge is not the exclusive property of the knower. Knowledge defined as an 'effect' and modality of existence denies any central role to the knowing subject as the sole locus of intelligibility. Ṣadrā's defense of the unification of the intellect and the intelligible is essentially non-subjectivist in the sense that it places knowledge not in the internal procedures of the mind but in the interactions between the knowing subject, the world, and the *intelligibilia*, all of which are subsumed under the all-inclusive reality of existence.

The comparisons between the two philosophers, however, stop here. Ṣadrā's analysis of existence is a far cry from the main thrust of modern philosophy. For one, Ṣadrā's philosophy is grounded in a concept of transcendent that retains and expands the fundamental vision of traditional metaphysics. The knowing subject or the 'individual' never stands out as a major concern of the traditional philosopher. The individual does not arise as a proper term of philosophical analysis for it is seen as part of the larger framework of existence and intelligibility. There is an even greater contrast between what Ṣadrā means by transcendent and how it is used in modern philosophy. Ṣadrā defines the transcendent as that which not only goes beyond the individual but also reaches out to the Divine. By contrast, a common tendency in modern philosophy is to see the transcendent as that which lies beyond the sense-experience of the individual but which does not involve necessarily any references to the Divine

in the religious and metaphysical sense of the term. The transcendent can be defined as a system of relations, history, memory, the hermeneutic circle, and so on, and it will be perfectly logical to use the term without assigning to it a religious connotation.[3] It goes without saying that Ṣadrā’s use of the term transcendent is based on both the philosophical and religious senses of the term. Any comparisons between Ṣadrā and other philosophers will have to keep these points in mind.

In discussing Ṣadrā’s transcendent metaphysics, two main issues stand out. The first is the question of mystical knowledge and the extent to which Ṣadrā’s transcendent wisdom lends support to mysticism. Ṣadrā’s defense of the unification of the intellect and the intelligible and a host of other epistemic concepts which he borrows from Suhrawardī and Ibn al-‘Arabī make him a good candidate for a mystic. Yet, Ṣadrā was neither a mere Peripatetic-Illuminationist philosopher nor a Sufi in the conventional sense of the term. His ‘synthesis’ calls for a different typology to locate him within the Islamic intellectual tradition. The second issue is Ṣadrā’s claim to present knowledge as a way of finding existence. I shall explore Ṣadrā’s idea that in claiming to know ourselves and other beings, we respond to something larger than us, and that this larger context is provided by existence and its various modes of ‘expansion,’ ‘relationality,’ ‘flow,’ and ‘self-delimitation.’ A metaphysics that prioritizes existence over other considerations leads to a concept of the self situated in a framework of relations. This is contrasted to the disengaged agent of Cartesian philosophy which is privileged to see things from the point of view of a ‘world-less subject.’ The kind of epistemology that Ṣadrā advocates pre-empts such a possibility, and leads to a notion of the self that is engaged in the larger context of ontological relations. In Ṣadrā, the ‘self’ never arises as a self-enclosed entity in the first place, and this makes self-knowledge more than a mere knowledge of the self. Any discussion of the self already presupposes the existence of the non-self.

3.1. EPISTEMOLOGY SPIRITUALIZED: IS MYSTICAL KNOWLEDGE POSSIBLE?

In modern scholarship, Ṣadrā's concept of transcendent wisdom has been the subject of two divergent readings.[4] The first considers Ṣadrā a 'mainstream' philosopher with interests in Sufi themes. Those who subscribe to this view focus on the analytical aspects of Ṣadrā's thought and present him as an Illuminationist-Peripatetic thinker. Much of Ṣadrā's elaborate discussions of such traditional subjects as existence, essence, substance, accident and causality are seen as original yet eventually Peripatetic deliberations.[5] This line of interpretation is tenable only to a certain extent and can be defended only when we confine Ṣadrā's thought to the dense analyses of the *Asfār*. While the *Asfār* itself contains many passages that easily place Ṣadrā within the ranks of Muslim mystics, his other works reveal him even more as a man in search of mystical knowledge. In the introduction to his *al-Mabda' wa'l-ma'ād*, Ṣadrā says that he wrote the *Asfār* with the 'people of philosophical investigation' (*arbāb al-naẓar*) in mind.[6] In the *Kasr aṣnām al-jāhiliyyah*, he launches a virulent attack on what he considers to be 'pretentious mystics (*'āmmat al-mutaṣawwifah*) and ordinary preachers' (*'awāmm al-wu''āẓ*)[7] while distinguishing them from the 'community of God and people of the heart.'[8] Therefore, it is not surprising that many of Ṣadrā's works contain clearly Sufi references when Ṣadrā is talking about such overtly religious issues as the purification of the soul, spiritual wayfaring, resurrection, the hereafter, and the ways of knowing God.[9]

The second line of interpretation treats Ṣadrā as a straight Sufi thinker and 'gnostic' (*'ārif*). Those on this camp adduce as evidence Ṣadrā's passionate endorsement of Ibn al-'Arabī on all of the key points of philosophy and his use of a distinctively Sufi vocabulary when talking about intuitive knowledge.[10] Ṣadrā is fond of bringing up various Sufi themes in the middle of a straightforward philosophical discussion, and does it with considerable frequency. Furthremore, Ṣadrā's works contain

numerous references to practically all the major figures of classical Sufism including Bāyazid Bastāmī, Junayd al-Baghdādī, Abū Manṣūr al-Ḥallāj, Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī, Ghazālī, Abū Sa'īd Abi'l-Khayr, Farīd al-Dīn 'Aṭṭār, Abū Ḥafṣ 'Umar Suhrawardī, Ibn al-Fāriḍ, Jalāl al-Dīn al-Rūmī, Ibn al-'Arabī, Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī, Dāwūd al-Qayṣarī and Maḥmūd Shabistarī. One can also mention the occasional use of Arabic and Persian mystical poetry in Ṣadrā's Arabic writings as well as his diwan of poetry in Persian.[11] While these references point to Ṣadrā's strong predilections toward Sufism, in the final analysis they are not sufficient to declare him a purely Sufi writer. The analytical aspect of his thought is too strong and ubiquitous to brush aside.

One can say that both views offer valuable possibilities for an engaged reading of Ṣadrā. Yet they fail to bring out the 'synthetic' nature of his thought and overlook his unrelenting effort to dovetail the various strands of classical Islamic thought. While Ṣadrā cannot be considered a mainstream Peripatetic like al-Fārābī or Ibn Sīnā for his transcendent wisdom claims to overcome both the Peripatetic and Illuminationist metaphysics, he cannot be regarded a Sufi either in the traditional sense of the term. His works not only contain elements that are clearly Avicennan but also disagree with certain views that are traditionally associated with classical Sufism. Furthermore, neither Ṣadrā's autobiography nor the available hagiographical sources indicate that Ṣadrā was initiated into Sufism. Nor do we have any indication in Ṣadrā's works that he advocated following a particular Sufi order (*ṭarīqah*) as a condition or end-result of his transcendent wisdom. Even his discussion of *nubuwwah*, *imāmah* and *shuyūkhah* as the three stages of the 'great, middle and lesser guidance' (*riyāsah*) falls short of pointing toward any formal attachment.[12]

This disparity between philosophical and practical Sufism appears to be in tandem with the Safavid context in which Ṣadrā lived and composed his works. It is during this period that we see the rise of a new distinction between 'theoretical wisdom'

(*'irfān naẓarī*) and 'practical wisdom' (*'irfān 'amalī*)—a distinction that will be the hallmark of philosophical thought in Persian Islam to this day. This interesting distinction can be attributed to the Shiitization (*tashayyu'*) of Persia at the hands of the Safavids on the one hand, and the peculiar and somewhat uneasy relationship between Sufism and (Safavid) Shiism, on the other. The Safavids' conscious effort to make Persia a 'Shiite land,' which began after the second half of the sixteenth century and reached a peak in the seventeenth century, resulted in the diminishing presence of Sunni scholars, philosophers and Sufi orders in the predominantly Shiite-Persian territories. While such common Sufi themes as the purification of the soul and the default nobility of an ascetic life found their way into the works of many Persian-speaking philosophers, an important outcome of the official wedding between the Safavid power and the Twelve Imam Shi'ism was the eastward migration of major Sufi orders to India. Given the deliberate efforts of the Safavids to consolidate their rule as a Shiite power against their archrival the Sunni Ottomans, it was only a matter of time before the Sunni Sufi orders diminished in power and population as they were the only organized network of Sunni Islam in Persia in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.[13]

The critical attitude of some Shiite scholars toward a number of Sufi ideas and practices seems to have contributed to the interpretation of Sufi orders as deviations from what we might call a typically Shiite spirituality centered around a passionate devotion to the Family of the Prophet (*ahl al-bayt*) and the twelve Imams. This peculiar aspect of Shiite spirituality appears to have left little or no space for traditional Sufism that preached a different kind of spiritual allegiance and which could be seen as rivalling the centrality of Shiite Imams. Even in cases where established Sufi organizations were accepted by Shiite communities, they had to take on a Shiite color by incorporating such elements of Shiism as Shiite *ḥadīth*, the twelve Imams and their spiritual-esoteric function. During and after the seventeenth century, the Sunni Sufi orders diminished in number and

influence in Safavid Persia, and the distinction between theoretical and practical wisdom, which we do not find anywhere else in the Islamic world, became further established.

Ṣadrā's career paralleled another important development in Safavid Persia: the rise of the Akhbārī-Uṣūlī bifurcation in Shiism. The Akhbārīs, spearheaded by Mullā Muḥammad Amīn ibn Muḥammad Sharīf of Astarābād (d.1623–4), rejected all sources of knowledge other than what has been transmitted from the revelation, i.e., the Qur'ān, and the traditions of the Prophet and the Shiite Imams. For them, the role of the *'ulamā'* was to interpret these established texts according to their internal logic and literal meaning. Even *ijtihād* as understood by the *fuqahā'* was redundant as they claimed to add something to the sources that was not in them. This line of thinking led the Akhbārīs to reject speculative philosophy, metaphysics, and much of Sufism. To prove that *akhbār*, i.e., the reports of the previous imams and scholars were enough a foundation for interpreting religion, the famous Akhbārī scholar Muḥammad Bāqir Majlīsī wrote his famous *Biḥār al-anwār*—a monumental work collecting in 176 volumes all of the available reports transmitted from the Shiite Imams and other Shiite *'ulamā.'*

The robust anti-intellectualism of the Akhbārīs, which is comparable to some of the *ahl al-ḥadīth*, however, does not seem to have deterred either Ṣadrā or his mentor Mīr Dāmād from undertaking a serious study of theology, philosophy, mysticism. Ṣadrā's attack on the pseudo-Sufis in his *Kasr aṣnām al-jāhiliyyah* is as much directed at what he considered to be pretentious ascetics as at the self-proclaimed pietism of the Akhbārīs. Furthermore, Ṣadrā was openly critical of the strict literalism of certain Ḥanbalī scholars,[14] and this can be seen as an indirect reference to the Akhbārīs of the time with whom Ṣadrā had obvious differences. Even though by the end of the eighteenth century the Uṣūlīs had re-established themselves, thanks to the work of Āqā Muḥammad Bihbahānī, and certain Sufi orders come back to Persia, the primary interest of the great majority of Shiite intelligentsia remained confined to 'theoretical

wisdom.' It is fair to say that the situation has not changed in any substantial way in the Persian speaking world of philosophy today.[15]

This short background may help us understand the absence of institutional or 'practical' Sufism in Ṣadrā and his likes during the Safavid period. None of the above, however, is sufficient for us to write off the claim of mysticism in Ṣadrā's thought. This is not only because Ṣadrā's strong predilection toward Sufi metaphysics cannot be explained simply in terms of Safavid or Shiite history but also because Ṣadrā's concept of existence and knowledge leads to a mode of thinking that is bound to be mystical. As I shall argue below, philosophical mysticism flows naturally and almost necessarily from Ṣadrā's carefully articulated deliberations on existence and knowledge. This is where Ṣadrā's thought is closely linked to *both* the Sufism of Ibn al-'Arabī and the mystical-Neoplatonic tendencies of Ibn Sīnā and Suhrawardī.

Before going any further, however, a word must be said about mysticism itself. The difficulties involved in any definition of mysticism require little explanation. In a broad sense, mysticism includes a wide range of ideas and practices from an ascetic life and supplications to miracles, metaphysics, and intuitive knowledge. It is commonly contrasted to what Russell has called the 'scientific impulse,' and presented by its critics as a form of poetic imagination devoid of cognitive content.[16] It is also described as a closed system not available to the non-initiate. The kind of mysticism that we find in Ṣadrā does not exactly correspond to any of these definitions. Nor can Ṣadrā be considered a mystic like a Shankaracharya, Hallāj or St. Francis of Asisi. His mode of thinking is 'philosophical mysticism': mysticism as a mode of cognition and pure consciousness, as a way of overcoming the subject-object bifurcation, and finally finding the Divine in the order of existence through intuitive knowledge.

There is a sense in which we can say that the kind of mysticism we find in Ṣadrā is a logical extension of the 'rational

mysticism' of al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā. Recognizing the possibility of obtaining knowledge through means other than rational procedures and sense data, the Muslim Peripatetics had admitted that knowledge gained from a source outside the individual is a first step toward accepting a notion of knowledge broad enough to recognize mystical knowledge as a valid epistemic claim. The critical philosopher may disagree with the content of such claims. In fact, the skeptical philosopher may reject the mystic's claim to knowledge on account of two main objections: first, the impossibility of gaining knowledge from any source(s) outside reason and experience and second, the impossibility of proving the validity of intuitive knowledge through rational demonstration (*burhān*).

At any rate, the role of mystical experience in the mystic's attempt to make an epistemic claim works in a way similar to the indispensable function of the active intellect as a condition of gaining knowledge. In this regard, Ibn Sīnā's working principle that knowledge is based on syllogism on the one hand, and some incorrigible and universal principles that can be neither constructed rationally nor derived from experience on the other, makes the appellation 'rationalist' a tenuous one for most Muslim philosophers.[17] In fact, Ibn Sīnā attempts to construct a *theory* of mystical knowledge in a famous section of the *Ishārāt* called *Maqāmāt al-'ārifīn* where he explores and eventually approves of the legitimacy of the mystics' claim to veritable knowledge. Here Ibn Sīnā presents himself as a philosopher who can perfectly understand, appreciate, and give a 'demonstrative' account of what the mystic claims to have as veritable knowledge. As he puts it, the 'mystics' (*'ārifīn*) have 'some exterior states (*umūr ẓāhirah*) denied by those who deny them but praised by those who really know them.'[18] The crucial point is that Ibn Sīnā's overwhelmingly positive attitude is extended to mysticism not merely as asceticism and devotion but as a mode of knowledge.

The central role played by the active intellect in Peripatetic epistemology opens up further avenues for 'intellectual

mysticism,' and Ṣadrā makes full use of it in his more mystical expositions. As a principle of intellection that remains outside the knowing subject, the active intellect, and conjunction with it, confirms the possibility of obtaining knowledge from a supra-rational and supra-individual source. The active intellect's intervention into the process of knowledge as a principle of cognition external to the mind prevents intellection from becoming an internal procedure of the mind. It is not hard to see the underlying link between this delineation of the active intellect and Ṣadrā's more elaborate language of presence, unveiling, illumination and intuition. It will be wrong, however, to think of the active intellect only in terms of epistemology. As I have discussed in Chapter II, Ṣadrā places the active intellect within the domain of metaphysics and does not shy away from assigning a clearly mystical and even ecstatic function to it. This is borne out by the fact that Ṣadrā joins al-Fārābī in associating the active intellect with the Archangel Gabriel called with various names including the 'rays, lights, and effects' of the Divine Essence (*al-dhāt al-ilāhiyyah*).[19] In short, the function of the active intellect as a principle of metaphysics and a condition of knowledge provides a basis for making a cogent case for intuitive knowledge.

Finally, we should briefly touch upon the place of revelation (*waḥy*) in Ṣadrā's epistemology. If the mystic can demonstrate that there is a kind of knowledge that falls outside the limited scope of reason and sense-data and that he can verify the content of such knowledge through rational analysis (*burhān*), then he will be on a safer ground. As we have seen before, Ṣadrā presents numerous arguments to establish this very point. Now, the case for a mystical theory of knowledge has a better chance of success in a theistic context because the tenets of a religion contained in revelation already go beyond the limited scope of reason and experience. If there is one valid form of knowledge outside reason and sense-data already established through the Divine word, why not another one? While Ṣadrā holds fast to the categorical distinction between revelation (*waḥy*) and inspiration

(*ilhām*), he is aware of the implications of revealed knowledge for the validity of non-rational forms of knowledge. As a Muslim philosopher, he could not have remained indifferent to the epistemic challenge of revelation to philosophy. Unlike the Farabian attempt to humanize the process of revealed knowledge, Ṣadrā takes revelation to be a special case of knowledge to be understood in its own terms. This, of course, is not without consequences for inspirational or intuitive knowledge. That is why Ṣadrā sees God as the true founder of the science of metaphysics: 'This science is nobler than it can be established by a human because God has established it through revelation and inspiration given to the prophets—peace be upon them—, and the previous philosophers have taken the principles of this science from the niche of prophecy (*mishkāt al-nubuwwah*).'[20] In short, the foundation of metaphysics is neither reason nor even intuition but revelation and what the prophets and philosophers have deduced from it.[21]

With the exception of revelation that stands on its own as a special kind of knowledge, there is an element of Platonic intellectualism in all of the above. Once we accept Plato's basic insight that the true knowledge of things lies outside and above them, it becomes logical to say that knowledge is not only constructed but also received and discovered. This provides an important *raison d'etre* for non-rational and non-discursive forms of knowledge in Islamic philosophy. All that a philosopher like Ṣadrā needs to do is to take the next step and declare the source of this special kind of knowledge, i.e., mystical vision and experience to be more real and reliable than what is available to us through rational analysis and sense data. Both the *intelligibilia* and the *sensibilia* bring us to the threshold of non-rational knowledge in that they are ultimately based on some kind of an intuition which makes both rational and empirical knowledge adequate for our cognitive dealings with the world.

This 'rational' explanation for the veracity of mystical knowledge, however, does not nullify the fact that a mystic's claim to a particular form of knowledge can be contested on

various grounds. The differences among the Sufis themselves regarding epistemic claims are notorious. One such celebrated case is Aḥmad Sirkhindī's rejection of *waḥdat al-wujūd* as a lower state of the understanding of *tawḥīd* and his proposal to correct it with *waḥdat al-shuhūd*. Among the philosophers who claim to base the principles of their central teachings on some sort of a mystical experience and intuition, one particularly revealing case is the contrast between Ṣadrā and Suhrawardī. Both philosophers work from a similar concept of 'tasted' and 'realized' knowledge and structure their philosophical conclusions around similar if not identical experiences of 'witnessing.' The result, however, is two different ontological systems: Suhrawardian 'essentialism' versus Sadrean 'existentialism.' So, there is no question that particular cases of mystical knowledge based on mystical experience are subject to multiple readings. That different and even contradictory conclusions can be drawn from similar or identical experiences, however, does not negate the legitimacy of mystical knowledge. It simply underscores its fragile nature when it is articulated into a second-order proposition. This is where the philosopher with a claim to mystical experience re-enters the domain of discursive reasoning and attempts to demonstrate the rational basis of his visions. Ṣadrā's claim that 'knowledge as experience' cannot be gained through reason alone but can be explained in terms that are intelligible to the non-initiate underlies his concern to provide an intellectual basis for all mystical experiences. Ṣadrā's oft-repeated principle that 'true demonstration (*al-burhān al-ḥaqīqī*) does not contradict witnessing based on unveiling (*al-shuhūd al-kashfī*)'[22] underscores an important fault line between mystical experience and the way it is articulated in philosophical language.

Now, let us turn to how Ṣadrā makes a case for mystical experience as a basis for knowledge. In Chapter II, I focused on the philosophical aspects of Ṣadrā's epistemology and stated that Ṣadrā considers representation as a legitimate form of knowledge only when it applies to second-order conceptualizations. Against

knowledge as representation, he proposes two alternatives: unification of the intellect and the intelligible, and knowledge-by-presence. Both views are derivatives of Ṣadrā's gradational ontology and culminate in knowledge as a form of witnessing and unveiling—the two terms of mystical epistemology employed by Suhrawardī and Ibn al-'Arabī. When the soul passes from one state of being to another, say, from sensation to imagination, it not only acquires a higher epistemic ability to analyze concepts but also becomes 'more' in an existential sense. By reaching a higher ontological status, the self becomes a 'simple intellect' (*'aql basīṭ*), and contains in itself 'all intelligibles.'

What enables the soul to become a receptive agent of the intelligible form of things is its isomorphic unity with the intelligible world. But how does the soul reach this stage? How can something material and sensate become a container for something non-material? Ṣadrā's answer lies in his spiritual intellectualism, which is summed up in his oft-repeated idea that the soul is a physical entity in its origination and a spiritual-intellectual being in its subsistence. Through its trans-substantial movement, the soul emerges as a material substance and gradually sheds its qualities of physical existence as it progresses toward the perception of intelligible forms. The idea that the soul is material in its origin is pre-Sadrean and goes back to Aristotle. With Ṣadrā, however, it assumes a far more significant role and accounts for the soul's intellectual and spiritual transformation through knowledge: the more the soul knows, the more intense and simple it becomes in terms of ontological proximity to the world of the *intelligibilia*. Knowledge is a way of participating in the intelligible world, and for Ṣadrā, this has a transforming effect on the knower because such a participation or unification elevates the soul to higher levels of cognition.

This elevation in the hierarchy of existence and intelligibility is closely related to Ṣadrā's doctrine of disembodiment (*tajarrud*), which I have already analyzed at some length. The definition of intelligibility as disembodiment entails non-

attachment from the material world: the soul becomes a simple being and finally unites with the active intellect through the stages of gradation and disembodiment. The key idea here is 'disengagement' from the material in the broadest sense of the term. This not only calls for the unadulterated and uninterrupted concentration of the mind on the pure intelligibles but also requires the soul's detachment from material pleasures that hinder it from a full-fledged participation in the 'world of the sacred.' When describing the stages of the 'knowers' (*al-'ārifūn*), Ibn Sīnā stipulates 'non-attachment' as a condition of attaining happiness: 'If the knowers and those who are above imperfection shed themselves of the pollution of relation to the body and are released from preoccupation with it, they will reach the world of saintliness and happiness, and the highest perfection will be engrained in them.'[23] Not surprisingly, Ibn Sīnā's description of how knowers reach intellectual and spiritual realization is in perfect harmony with what Muslim mystics will have to say about the subject. But Ṣadrā takes the step Ibn Sīnā does not—a step that establishes realized knowledge as superior to other forms of cognition. This is where disengagement as a condition of intelligibility is rendered into a method of spiritual purification. As Ṣadrā repeatedly states, the meaning of things is revealed to the knower through his unification with the intelligible world on the one hand, and with the world of separate spiritual realities (*mujarradāt*), on the other.[24] All this hinges upon releasing oneself from the limitations of material existence in both the epistemic and spiritual senses of the term.

By applying this principle to human knowledge, Ṣadrā establishes a strong link between epistemology and mystical knowledge: one's state of spiritual perfection is proportionate to one's proximity to the world of the *intelligibilia*. This is also the philosopher's gateway to 'true happiness.' Following the Neoplatonic tradition, Ṣadrā defines detachment from the material world as a condition and end result of happiness (*sa'ādah*). It is to be remembered that happiness is traditionally contrasted with sensual pleasure and defined as a spiritual state

of consciousness. In Ibn Sīnā's terms, 'the internal pleasures are higher than those of the senses.'[25] The fully realized and virtuous souls reach a pinnacle in death whereby they leave the body—their main obstacle to unification with the world of pure intelligibles and spiritual substances. One's state of consciousness and happiness is at its highest after physical death provided that the soul in question has already reached a state of spiritual and moral perfection. In Ṣadrā's words, 'as long as the soul's existence is attached to the body, it cannot reach the perfect intellective state and cannot exercise power except on the animal faculties.'[26]

Now, the word 'death' (*al-mawt*) in this context is to be understood in both physical and spiritual senses. In the case of physical death, which applies to all mortal beings, it refers to the transfer of the soul to the next world in which the soul meets God, the ultimate source of truth and happiness. In the case of spiritual death followed by spiritual rebirth, the mystic considers it to be a possibility 'here and now.' Spiritual death is thus defined as the detachment of the soul from the lower levels of existence and the carnal desires of the ego. The famous Socratic-Platonic saying 'die before you die,' which is also a saying attributed to the Prophet of Islam,[27] expresses the same idea. Ṣadrā defines the 'pleasure of our intellective life' to be higher and nobler than other forms of happiness:

> Our self-consciousness is more intense when we leave the body because [at that moment] our presence to ourselves becomes more complete and firm. Since most people are immersed in their material bodies and occupied with them, they forget themselves. As God the Exalted said: 'They forgot God and God made them forget themselves' (Qur'ān 59:19). They do not perceive themselves because of this intense relationship except as mixed with their bodies. This is so because the conjunction of the soul with the body and its relation to it is like the conjunction of light with shadow, torch with smoke, and a person with his image in the mirror (…)
>
> When this relationship between the soul and the body is terminated and this obstacle disappears, the intelligibles become

> visible, their consciousness present, their knowledge real (*'aynan*), and [their] perception an intellectual vision (*ru'yah 'aqliyyah*). Thus the pleasure of our intellective life becomes more perfect and nobler than all other forms of goodness and happiness. You have already learnt that real pleasure is existence (*wujūd*) and especially intellective existence due to its detachment from the mixture of non-existence. This is particularly true for the Real Beloved and the most perfect Necessary Being for it is the reality of existence that contains in itself all aspects of existence. Partaking of Its pleasure is the highest pleasure and repose. In fact, it is the repose in which there is no worry. *Asfār*, IV, 2, pp. 124–125

Detachment from the limitations of sensual and material existence as a condition of happiness is an old idea in classical philosophy, going back to Plato and other ancient philosophers. Before Ṣadrā, the Muslim philosophers had considered intellectual happiness possible only in the absence of material hindrances. Ibn Sīnā, for instance, goes so far as to say that 'every evil results from attachment to matter and non-being.'[28] This view, Platonist in spirit, is based on two sets of distinctions: one between sensation and intellection in epistemology, and the other between becoming and being in ontology. For Plato, sense data, reserved for the transient world of becoming, could only yield opinion (*doxa*), which is ontologically imperfect and epistemologically unreliable whereas *episteme*, the true knowledge of things, can only be obtained from the world of the Forms for it has a higher ontological status and warrants epistemic credibility.[29] True and enduring happiness is derived from knowing these Forms. Furthermore, detachment from the world of becoming 'represents a demand for universal rationality' and elevates the individual to a position of spiritual discernment higher than one's limited, often passionate and thus erroneous point of view. This 'universal rationality' is grounded in 'a world of immutable norms, which are opposed to the perpetual state of becoming and changing appetites characteristic of individual, corporeal life.'[30]

At this point, the opposite of existence is not non-existence (*'adam*) but becoming, for becoming signifies what is potential, thus imperfect and incomplete in things. This is a crucial point for understanding Ṣadrā.[31] As the classical philosophers insist, existence is reality, perfection, existential plenitude, completion, comprehensiveness, permanence, light, clarity, goodness and order whereas becoming is imperfection, confusion, cloudiness, transience and illusion. Ṣadrā sums up this radical distinction by saying that 'the good (*al-khayr*) in things comes from the fact that they are actual whereas evil (*al-sharr*) stems from what is potential. A thing cannot be evil in every respect; otherwise it would be non-existent. And no being, in so far as it is something existent, is evil. It becomes evil as a privation of perfection such as ignorance, or it necessitates its own non-existence in other things such as oppression (*al-ẓulm*).'[32]

While this axiological description of existence characterizes a good part of medieval philosophy, it takes on a special meaning with Ṣadrā. For the mystic of a philosophical bent, the above qualifiers of existence are not mere reports of metaphysical facts but rather what Rudolf Otto calls 'saving actualities.'[33] The mystics' interest in questions of existence lies in the fact that the problem of existence is not 'metaphysics but a doctrine of salvation.'[34] Quoting 'Alā' al-Dawlah al-Simnānī, one of Ibn al-'Arabī's important commentators, Ṣadrā defines the meaning of the study of existence not as an investigation of actual substances and their properties, as Aristotle would say, but as a Divine theophany (*tajallī*): 'The True Existence (*al-wujūd al-ḥaqq*) is God the Exalted, the absolute existence (*al-wujūd al-muṭlaq*) is His act (*fi'l*), and the conditioned existence (*al-wujūd al-muqayyad*) is His work (*athar*). And what we mean by the absolute existence is not existence as a generic abstract term but expanding existence.'[35] Ṣadrā completes Simnānī's statement by asserting one more time that 'the first existence that has emanated [from God] is the expanding absolute existence.'[36] Approaching existence and knowledge from such an axiological point of view, Ṣadrā takes the distinction between being and becoming to be foundational for his spiritual epistemology and

cites Ibn al-ʻArabī's 'five Divine presences' (*al-ḥaḍarāt al-ilāhiyyah al-khamsah*) as intermediary stages linking the two worlds in a hierarchical manner.[37]

Defined as both intellectual pleasure and spiritual refinement, happiness rests on an axiology of existence. In *Kitāb al-millah*, Fārābī explains happiness as proximity to the intelligible world.[38] Ibn Sīnā concurs: 'Happiness cannot be attained except through perfection in knowledge.'[39] Ghazālī bases happiness on the 'noble nature of the intellect,' reasserting the link between intelligibility as disembodiment and happiness as spiritual detachment.[40] In his *Abkār al-afkār*, the theologian Sayf al-Dīn al-Āmidī (d.1233) defines the end of human life as spiritual perfection (*kamāl*), and spiritual perfection means the comprehensive knowledge of the *intelligibilia*.[41] In a similar vein, the Andalusian mystic and philosopher Ibn Sabʻīn (d.1268) describes the stages of happiness as the 'taste of wisdom which is to grasp the realities of things' at the beginning and 'the knowledge of God' (*maʻrifat Allāh*) and 'proximity to the First Truth' at the end.[42] Perhaps the best example of this approach is to be found in Abū Bakr al-Rāzī's (d.925) famous treatise *al-Sīrat al-falsafiyyah* in which al-Rāzī states that 'the most virtuous matter for which we were created and towards which we are moved is not getting bodily pleasures, but the acquisition of knowledge and the practice of justice; through these two comes about our deliverance from this world of ours to the world in which there is neither death nor pain.'[43]

Ṣadrā joins this tradition by construing happiness within the context of his gradational ontology. He reaffirms existence as the source of existential and axiological qualities: existence is what gives meaning, intelligibility, and order to everything from the angelic to the mineral world. Happiness as the 'consciousness of existence' (*al-shuʻūr bi'l-wujūd*) is true felicity, for it is found not in the fleeting reality of becoming but in the permanent habitat of the *intelligibilia*. In one of his bold contrasts, Ṣadrā says that 'the pleasure of the angels of the spirit in perceiving the light is above the pleasure of the donkey's perception of

sexual pleasure and nuts.'[44] The soul finds its true identity by 'shedding' the imperfections of material existence, i.e., worldly pleasures, and by becoming a part of the intelligible world. In a similar way, it comes to know things as they are through their intelligible forms, which are ontologically more real and cognitively more reliable than their sensate properties. Knowing as appropriation and participation in the intelligible world gives us a mystico-philosophical concept of happiness.

> Know that existence is goodness and happiness, and the consciousness of existence is also goodness and happiness.[45] But existents are of varying degrees in terms of perfection and imperfection. Whenever existence is more perfect, its detachment from non-existence is more [real], and happiness in it is more immediate. And whenever it is imperfect, its mixture with evil and misfortune is more. Now, the most perfect and noble of all existents is the First Truth/Reality (*al-ḥaqq al-awwal*), which is worthy of [comprehension] first by the separate intellective existents and then by the souls. The lowest of existents is prime matter, time, and motion, and then material forms, then natural forms (*al-ṭabā'i*), and then souls.... Since existents are of different degrees, happiness, which is their perception, also allows different degrees of superiority. The existence of intellective faculties is thus superior to the existence of animal faculties of desire and anger.... When our souls become stronger, terminate their relations with the body, and return to their true identity and source, they acquire a joy and happiness incomparable to sensual pleasures. This is so since the cause of this pleasure [i.e., the consciousness of existence] is the strongest, most complete and immediate of all joyous pleasures. *Asfār*, IV, 2, pp. 121–122[46]

The critical question here is how Ṣadrā makes a transition from disembodiment as a condition of intelligibility to disembodiment as a state of spirituality. It is to be noted that non-materiality by itself is not sufficient for the kind of spirituality Ṣadrā advocates; otherwise we would have to accept everything immaterial as spiritual. It does, however, suggest that such beings meet the initial criterion of spirituality, i.e., the detachment from the

limitations of corporeal existence. And yet, this is not enough to ground spirituality in intelligibility. What is needed is to redefine intelligibility in terms of onto-spiritual qualities. To do this, Ṣadrā has to treat the world of the *intelligibilia* as a domain of spiritual actualities and construct an ontology of spiritual beings. This can be done only when we blur the demarcation line between the ontological and the spiritual and ultimately overcome it.

This is precisely what Ṣadrā does when he alternates between the demonstrative language of the Peripatetis, the gnostic mysticism of Ibn al-ʻArabī, and the various Qur'ānic terms.[47] As part of his general epistemology, Ṣadrā repeatedly comes back to the definition of true knowledge as one obtained through unveiling (*mukāshafah*), confirmed by revelation (*waḥy*), and proved through demonstrative arguments (*burhān*).[48] This is where Ṣadrā parts ways with the Peripatetic tradition: while disembodiment as a condition of intelligibility carries no spiritual and mystical overtones in al-Fārābī or Ibn Sīnā, it does become a cornerstone of Ṣadrā's claim that true knowledge always points to perfection of an onto-spiritual kind because the levels of existence are nothing but stages of spiritual refinement. This is also in tandem with the Neoplatonic idea of treating the 'stages of spiritual progress' as corresponding to 'different degrees of virtue.'[49]

In one of his personal testimonies, Ṣadrā describes his journey to certainty as follows:

> I used to busy myself with investigation (*al-baḥth*) and repetition, referring constantly to the study of the books of the philosophers of theory so much so that I believed that I had gained something. When my vision began to open a little bit and looked at myself…[and saw that I was] far from having the knowledge of the truths and the real truths, which cannot be perceived except through tasting (*dhawq*) and consciousness (*wijdān*). These are explained in the Book [i.e., the Qur'ān] and the Sunnah concerning the knowledge of God, His attributes and names, books, prophets, and the knowledge of the soul and its states in the grave, the resurrection, the reckoning, the scale,

> the bridge (*al-ṣirāṭ*), and the heaven and hellfire, whose truth cannot be known except through the teaching of God and cannot be unveiled except through the light of prophethood and sanctity. Commentary on the Chapter al-Wāqi'ah, *Tafsīr*, Vol. 7, p. 10

Furthermore, Ṣadrā considers knowledge essential for performing religious duties as well as for attaining virtues. This is an important step toward assigning an ethico-spiritual function to knowledge whereby intellective knowledge becomes a further step toward spiritual realization. For instance, Ṣadrā says that 'obedience to God is not complete without knowledge and knowledge is not attained except through the intellect.'[50] Obviously, this is a familiar theme in Islamic history, and one can cite numerous examples of it. Socrates, for instance, is reported to have said that 'all virtues come into being only through knowledge (*ma'rifah*).'[51] The proposition is true also when reversed: knowledge leads to virtue insofar as virtues are seen as having a cognitive value. Ibn Sīnā stipulates the purification of the soul as a condition of attaining knowledge and defines purification as obtainable by the 'assiduous performance of religious duties.'[52] This not only assigns knowledge a religious function but also sees religious duties as saturated with epistemic value. In a similar vein, Ṣadrā describes the acquisition of 'desirable sciences' (*al-'ulūm al-maṭlūbah*) as a conduit for happiness even in the hereafter.[53] All these provisions assign to knowledge not only an epistemic but also spiritual significance in that knowledge as bliss transforms the soul and brings it closer to the intelligible-spiritual world.[54] The philosophical justification of this premise therefore lies in the epistemic process itself: disembodiment as the *sine qua non* of intellection denotes the absence of impediments, imperfections, and darkness whereby the knowing subject is illuminated by a vision of the intelligible world.

The traditional definition of philosophy as 'the perfection of the soul by gaining the knowledge of the reality of things as they are through investigation and proofs, not through opinion and

imitation' confirms the ethical and spiritual function of philosophical knowledge.[55] As Plato says, the ultimate goal of philosophy as wisdom is to be theomorphic, i.e., 'God-like' (*al-tashabbuh bi'l-bāri' ta'ālah*).[56] This definition cannot be written off as turning philosophy into theology. Rather, it should be seen as challenging philosophy to elevate itself to the level of applied ethics and wisdom. There is, however, something deeper involved in asking philosophy to be more than what it is: to recognize the validity of that which is beyond the purview of speculative philosophy since, as Ṣadrā explains in his short autobiography, speculative philosophy by itself will not 'satisfy the heart, tranquil the soul, ease the intellect.'[57] The 'Divine sage' is the person who sets out on a journey toward God by climbing the ladder of intellectual and spiritual perfection: 'The expansion of the breast is the goal of practical wisdom, and the light is the goal of theoretical wisdom. The Divine sage (*al-hakīm al-ilāhī*) is the one who combines both and is the true believer in the language of the Sharī'ah, and this is a great triumph.'[58] Knowledge as a 'spiritual exercise'[59] is a step in the direction of drawing near unto God because to know the forms is to know an aspect of the Divine, i.e., 'what is in God's knowledge,' and thus attain proximity with It:

> Every celestial or elemental nature has an intellective substance as its principle and a substance that changes its existence. The relation of this intellective substance to these corporeal natures is like the relation of the perfect to the imperfect and of the principle to the derivative. God is ever closer to us than anything else, and these intellective substances are like the lights and rays of the First Necessary Light for they are the forms of what is in God's knowledge. Furthermore, they do not have an independent existence by themselves; their very essence is related to the Truth. *Asfār*, I, 3, pp. 95–96.

The knowledge of existence as a concrete state of consciousness is attained not in the mind, which perceives only the universals,[60] but in the 'heart' (*al-qalb*). This conclusion should not come as

a surprise since the kind of knowledge Ṣadrā has in mind here is not conceptual knowledge based on universals and categories but knowledge as unveiling and witnessing. While the mind perceives forms as universal and abstract concepts, realized knowledge, which is always singular and concrete, is revealed in what Ṣadrā calls 'direct witnessing' (*shuhūd 'aynī*), 'illuminative presence' (*ḥuḍūr ishrāqī*), and 'unveiling' (*kasfh* and *mukāshafah*).[61] He further states that 'the knowledge of existence can be acquired either by presential witnessing (*al-mushāhadah al-ḥuḍūriyyah*) or through rational argumentation (*istidlāl*) by analyzing its effects and concomitants. The latter, however, is nothing but flimsy knowledge.'[62]

In his Commentary on the *Uṣūl al-kāfī*, Ṣadrā refers to the 'spiritual heart' (*al-qalb al-ma'nawī*) as the intellect.[63] He further says that 'the noblest part of man is the real heart (*al-qalb al-ḥaqīqī*).'[64] This terminology of 'heart-knowledge' has its roots in the Islamic sources. Several Qur'ānic verses, which Ṣadrā quotes more than once, refer to the heart as an instrument of understanding: 'They have hearts but do not understand with them; they have eyes but do not see with them' (Qur'ān 7:179); 'Do not they travel on earth so that they have hearts with which they intellect? Verily, it is not the eyes that are blind but the hearts which are in the breast' (Qur'ān 22:46); 'Do not they ponder over the Qur'ān or are there locks on their hearts?' (Qur'ān 47:24). Following Ibn al-'Arabī's concept of the heart in broad outlines,[65] Ṣadrā refers to the heart as 'the intellective power, the locus of the perception of the Divine (*mash'ar al-ilāhī*), which is the abode of [Divine] signs and inspiration.'[66] The heart is thus the depository of the spiritual reality of existence when the veils of imperfection and ignorance are removed from it:

> …These are the obstacles that prevent the soul from the knowledge of the reality of things. Otherwise every soul with its natural disposition is good and capable of knowing the true nature of things because it is a Divine command (*amr*) nobler and distinct from all the other substances of this world. As for the Prophet, peace be upon

> Him, who said that demonic powers (*shayāṭīn*) hover over the heart of the children of Adam [to turn them away from] seeing the angelic world, it is an allusion to this capacity and to these veils that come between human souls and the angelic world. When these veils and impediments are removed from the heart of man, which is his rational soul,[67] the form of the world of Dominion (*al-mulk*) and Angelic presence (*al-malakūt*) and the structure of existence, as it is, become manifest in it. *Asfār*, IV, 2, p. 139

Ṣadrā's use of this Qur'ānic terminology provides an important clue for the kind of knowledge obtained through the epistemology of the heart.[68] To state briefly, this knowledge comes in the form of a 'descent' rather than construction and discovery. The heart does not simply process knowledge but functions as a place of 'revelation' or unveiling. This is where the analogy between heart-knowledge and revelation becomes further accentuated: revelation is *sent down* to the heart, not the mind, of the prophet as the human receptacle of the Divine word. In the case of the perfect man (*al-insān al-kāmil*), whom we can take as the penultimate mystic, knowledge as vision becomes so powerful that 'when the perfect man looks at this world and sees the heaven and earth and what is in them, its form becomes manifest in his heart so much so that even if his sight becomes obscured he still sees this form fully represented in his imagination and present in himself in a way that is more complete than the presence of external forms in his sensation.'[69] Obviously, this is not to suggest that all such knowledge is entitled to be religious revelation. But the process by which revelation reaches the heart of the prophet is similar to the way heart-knowledge functions in the mystic's claim to have spiritual knowledge. Ṣadrā's explanation of the process of revelation is worth quoting in full:

> The reason for the descent of the Word [of God] and the sending of the Book is that when the spirit of man is disengaged from the body and goes out of the shackle of the house of its mold and its natural place, journeying towards its Lord to witness His great signs, and

> is cleaned from the dirt of rebellion, material pleasures, desires, wicked thoughts and attachments, the light of knowledge and faith in God and His exalted dominion begins to shine for it. When this light is firmly established and substantiated, it becomes a sacred substance, which is called the active intellect by the philosopher-sages in the language of wisdom, and the Holy Spirit in the language of the Prophetic Law.
>
> Through this intense intellective light the secrets of what is on earth and heaven begin to shine in it [i.e., the spirit of man]. Then the truths of things begin to be seen just like the blurred images in the power of sight begin to be seen clearly through the light of sensate vision when it is not hindered by a veil. The veil here is an effect of nature and the dealings of this lower world. This is so because the hearts and the spirits, by account of their primordial disposition, are perfectly capable of receiving the light of wisdom and faith when darkness like disbelief, which corrupts it, does not overtake it or when a veil such as disobeying [the Divine] and the like does not cover it. *Asfār*, III, 2, pp. 24–25

It is not difficult to see what Ṣadrā is seeking to combine here in one single epistemology: intellectual truth and moral perfection. The soul's detachment from corporeal limitations is both an intellectual and spiritual exercise. It is an intellectual exercise because, as we discussed before, the highest form of intelligibility is obtained through the mind's detachment from the conditions of corporeality. Yet it is also a spiritual process because detachment has strongly ethical and religious overtones. Whether we define spirituality as having a cognitive experience or posit intellection as an essentially ethico-spiritual undertaking, the point remains that moral rectitude and spiritual discipline is a condition of epistemic veracity.[70] Ṣadrā's point is that the character of our epistemic search has a direct impact on what we can and cannot find. That is why he gives a long list of 'intellectual vices' that include 'false views and corrupt beliefs… that plague the soul and torture the heart.'[71] In one of his ruthless attacks on the Mutakallimūn, he scolds them for opposing *al-'urafā'* and says that 'what they know about the religious sciences is nothing but issues of controversy. Their goal in

knowledge is not the betterment of the soul, refinement of the inner, and cleansing of the heart.'[72] While these remarks concern the Kalām arguments and reveal Ṣadrā's overall attitude toward the Mutakallimūn, they also convey something of what Ṣadrā considers to be the ultimate goal of knowledge.

The four degrees of attaining knowledge complement the essential unity of the intellectual and the spiritual:

> There are four degrees of perfection [in knowing things]: the first is the refinement of one's outward state (*al-ẓāhir*) by following Divine orders and Prophetic law. The second is the refinement of one's inward state (*al-bāṭin*) and cleaning the heart from dark and despicable habits and behavior.[73] The third is the illumination [of the soul] by the forms of knowledge and favorable qualities. The fourth is the [spiritual] extinction (*fanā'*) of the soul from itself and fixing its gaze (*al-naẓar*) upon contemplating the First Lord and His Magnificence. This is the end of journeying towards God by following the path of the soul. After these stages, there are still many stations (*manāzil*) and degrees (*marāḥil*), which are no less than what one has followed before. But one should prefer to shorten [the discussion of] what one does not perceive except through witnessing and presence. This is due to the inability to explain what one does not comprehend except through light. As for those who have attained spiritual perfection (*al-kāmilūn*), after they have journeyed to God and reached Him, there are other journeys [for them], some of which are in the Truth (*al-ḥaqq*) and some of which are from the Truth but with the Truth. *Shawāhid*, pp. 207–208.

By assigning to the heart an epistemic function, Ṣadrā attempts to overcome the dichotomy between rational and mystical types of knowledge. The goal is to define rational cogitation as a step toward knowledge as unveiling and witnessing. This is where Ṣadrā *the philosopher* meets Ṣadrā *the mystic*: what the philosopher establishes through rational proofs does not contradict what the mystic attains through spiritual realization. To quote Ṣadrā's famous phrase: 'True demonstration does not contradict witnessing based on unveiling (*al-shuhūd al-kashfī*).'[74] The difference between the two modes of knowing is that

whereas rational proofs belong to second-order conceptualization, witnessing is a first-order experience which the mystic attains through spiritual realization, purification of the soul, contemplation and meditation. 'The difference between the sciences based on theory and the sciences based on vision,' says Ṣadrā, 'is like the difference between someone who knows the definition of sweetness and someone who has actually tasted sweetness; and someone who understands the definition of health and power and someone who is actually healthy and powerful.'[75] Articulating this point further, Ṣadrā introduces three types of knowers, and his tone turns into one of philosophical mysticism in no ambiguous terms.

> From the point of view of their intellectual potentialities, the knowers (*al-'ulamā'*) are of three kinds. The first are those who are complete in their perfection with their dispositions as in the case of the detached intellects (*al-'uqūl al-mufāraqah*). The second (group) requires perfection but does not need an extraneous element and agent of perfection from outside as in the case of the celestial souls. Insofar as their natural disposition is concerned, the souls of the Prophets, may peace be upon them, belong to this group. After reaching perfection, however, they usually join the first group. The third are imperfect in their natural dispositions and need for their perfection agents from outside themselves such as the dispensation of Divine books and messengers. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 503

In construing knowledge as unveiling and witnessing, Ṣadrā follows Ibn al-'Arabī's celebrated maxim that 'he who has no unveiling has no knowledge' (*man lā kashfa lahu la 'ilma lahu*).[76] Unveiling as seeing or witnessing is by definition based on three premises. First of all, it asserts the unique and particular nature of seeing. As discussed in Chapter II, seeing is a concrete act of cognition and involves the 'presence' of the object seen. Unveiling connotes a concrete experience of intelligible and spiritual realities as opposed to the 'abstract' nature of knowledge as representation and mirroring.

Secondly, unveiling as the disclosure of existence and intelligibility presupposes meaning to be a given quality of things because the mind unveils and discovers meaning inherent in things by removing the barriers of material embodiment and ignorance. The mind does not 'create' meaning but lets things manifest themselves and their intrinsic meanings through presence, illumination, witnessing, and clearing.[77] Thirdly, unveiling as a higher faculty of cognition rests on the knower's conscious and volitional act of removing the veils of imperfection and obscurity. This third condition is predicated upon the implementation of such spiritual exercises as the purification of the soul, attainment of virtues, daily prayers, contemplation, and so on, all of which can easily be quoted from a classical Sufi manual for the novices, and which underscore Ṣadrā's Sufi leanings. This, in turn, transforms the soul of the knower into a higher state of spiritual consciousness whereby the acts of being, knowing, and doing good become one. Thus the process of knowing becomes a process of intellectual and spiritual perfection. This view is in tandem with Ṣadrā's concept of the evolving soul which he construes as undergoing 'substantial motion' at all times from the corporeal to the spiritual.[78] This is how the soul reaches the Angelic World and becomes the cosmos or what Ṣadrā calls the 'great man (*al-insān al-kabīr*) in whom all beings are to be found.'[79] This is also how the 'Divine Gnostic (*al-'ārif al-rabbānī*)' becomes 'effaced in the light of [Divine] oneness.'[80]

It must be clear by now that the kind of mystical knowledge that Ṣadrā advocates rests on the idea of knowing as participation. Since Ṣadrā is eager to define the world of the *intelligibilia* in terms of spiritual substances, the intellect's participation in the intelligible world and its eventual unification with it is an important step toward blurring any clear-cut distinctions between the intellectual and the spiritual. When the soul as both intellect and heart attains perfect disembodiment and moral perfection, it can perceive things by seeing (*ibṣār*), witnessing (*shuhūd*), unveiling (*kashf*), and illumination (*ishrāq* and *tanwīr*).

This alternation between the two realms of consciousness is predicated upon Ṣadrā's attempt to combine his spiritual ontology with mystical epistemology.

But what is the precise nature of this mystical knowledge? Can we define its content? Is it communicable? As it is the case with all mystical literature, we find no handy answers to these questions. To begin with the first, we may describe mystical knowledge as a special kind of knowledge about God. We can add to this the divine mysteries available only to a select group of people such as prophets and saints. Defined as such, mystical knowledge is the knowledge of the mysterious and thus to be protected against the ignorance of the non-initiate. This makes mystical knowledge a purely religious act. But, as we have seen so far, the mystic's claim to sound knowledge is not limited to God. It extends to existence, the soul, the cosmos, the hereafter, and a host of other theological and philosophical issues. That is why Ṣadrā is never tired of presenting witnessing and unveiling as the most reliable tools of knowing the reality of things.

We may say that the claim of mysticism is one in which an attempt is made to formulate a holistic view of reality and a vision of unity (*tawḥīd*) in such a way as to open up a space for non-discursive forms of knowledge. To the extent to which mysticism in this general sense is applicable to Ṣadrā, he begins with knowledge as a 'report' about the way things are and ends in knowledge as experience and participation. In presenting the heart-intellect as the proper instrument of grasping this holistic reality, he appeals to both rational and non-rational types of knowledge. Quoting 'Ayn al-Quḍāt Hamadānī, the famous Sufi of the twelfth century, Ṣadrā agrees that 'reason is a sound scale, and its judgments are sound and certain containing no falsehood.'[81] Yet, the non-discursive forms of knowing are accorded a higher epistemic status for it is through them that we are able to see the whole. Ṣadrā considers the essence of the mystical understanding of the transcendent unity of existence (*waḥdat al-wujūd*) as a move toward seeing things through the eyes of unity. To bring this point home, Ṣadrā quotes al-Ghazālī

this time. ‘The fourth level of Divine unity,’ says Ghazālī, ‘is to see nothing but one in existence.’ But how can one see nothing but oneness when we continue to see the heavens, the earth, and all other beings that point to multiplicity rather than unity? The answer is that ‘this is the penultimate goal of the sciences of unveiling. Verily, what really exists is only one. The multiplicity [that you see] in it is only for the one who separates his vision. But the vision of the unifier (*al-muwaḥḥid*) is not separated [from oneness] by the multiplicity of the heaven, the earth, and other beings. He sees all things as one single thing. But the secrets of the sciences of unveiling cannot be jotted down in a book.’[82]

The goal is not only to attain this vision of oneness but also to articulate it as a philosophical truth. Ṣadrā presents this as a prerogative of his ‘transcendent wisdom’ when he says, after quoting the views of the Sufis on God’s knowledge of things, that ‘thus we have indeed made their unveiling, based on tasting, correspond to the principles of demonstration.’[83] This articulation also extends to religious knowledge. In a typical sentence, Ṣadrā says that ‘the religious law (*al-shar‘*) combined with reason is light upon light.’[84] He sees no contradiction between physical analysis which grants us access to the knowledge of existence as delimited through matter and form, logical analysis which enables us to know existence through universals, and mystical knowledge which supplies us with a direct vision and experience of existence. Lest we think that Ṣadrā is alone in this enterprise, we should remember that even Ibn Sīnā ended up admitting the validity of those who ‘engage in philosophy through tasting’ (*ahl al-ḥikmat al-dhawqiyyah*) in addition to those who ‘engage in philosophy through research’ (*ahl al-ḥikmat al-baḥthiyyah*).[85]

Furthermore, the experiential aspect of illuminative knowledge brings out the ‘subjective’ element in knowledge—an aspect that the logician-philosopher dreads as arbitrary, whimsical, unreliable. It is at this point that mysticism becomes a most troubling enterprise for the reason-bound philosopher, a kind of poetical imagination and even sophistry devoid of cognitive

content. While philosophy seeks to account for reality through clearly defined terms, not through subjective experiences, mysticism embraces human subjectivity as a *sine qua non* of the objective reality of who we are. More importantly, existence itself, as Ṣadrā relentlessly reminds us, defies any easy conceptualizations. Ibn al-'Arabī, who is a major source of inspiration for Ṣadrā's philosophical mysticism, asserts that 'the reason/intellect is a limitation and it delimits what is at hand in a single manner. But truth abhors such a delimitation.'[86] This is where the barriers between philosophy, logic, mysticism, heart, reason, intellect, and emotions are rendered loose. For the philosopher, this is too high a price to pay. For the mystic, this is a risk we are bound to take.

Ṣadrā rejects the charges of unintelligibility against mystical knowledge on several counts. One persistent argument is that the opponent of illuminative knowledge lacks the epistemic tools to understand the cognitive content of spiritual experience. The opponent fails to understand the epistemology of mystical knowledge for he does not possess the necessary vocabulary. According to Ibn al-'Arabī, 'a person whose reason is sound (*salīm*), that is, he who is not overcome by any obfuscation deriving from imagination and reflection, an obfuscation which would corrupt his consideration'[87] would recognize the plausibility of the mystic's claim to veritable knowledge even though he may lack any corresponding experience. This argument is interesting because, contrary to what we may expect, Ṣadrā is not arguing for a reciprocal experience in order to understand the content of mystical experience. All he has to say as a response to the critic is that he does not operate on a proper epistemology to make sense of the mystic's experiential knowledge. After analyzing the relationship between substance and accident according to the views of the gnostics (*al-'urafā'*), Ṣadrā makes the following remarks:

> You may think that the intentions [arguments] of these great gnostics, their concepts and symbolic words are devoid of demonstrative proof (*al-burhān*) and based on adventures of

> conjecture or poetic imaginations, from which they are to be exalted. The inability to apply their arguments to sound and demonstrative principles and established rules of philosophy is due to the imperfection of those who discuss their views, their lack of understanding them, and their weakness to comprehend those principles. In fact, the degree of their unveiling (*mukāshafah*) is above the degree of demonstrative proof in expressing certainty (*al-yaqīn*)…. True demonstration does not contradict witnessing based on unveiling. If in these matters discussed here there are points that seem to contradict theoretical philosophy, they are in reality their outward and visible spirit [in meaning and emanate] from the lights of prophecy and niche of sanctity that are cognizant of the degrees of existence and their concomitant qualities. That is why we do not abstain from explaining them even if those who pretend to be philosophers (*mutafalsifūn*) and their imitators disdain their examples. *Asfār*, I, 2, p. 315

Whether mystical knowledge is communicable or not presents another set of problems. If mystical knowledge is neither communicable nor susceptible to public scrutiny, then it should be discarded as a non-starter for philosophical inquiry. Furthermore, since mystical knowledge as unveiling is based on a special kind of experience that cannot be further explained in terms of another series of experiences, it does not lend itself to conceptual analysis in the conventional sense of the term. After all, the gnostic, as Ṣadrā tells us, is not simply after conceptual knowledge about God. The goal of the 'gnostic theosopher sages (*al-ḥukamā' al-muta'allihūn al-'ārifūn*)' is to witness God's beauty and perfection.[88] Mystical knowledge as witnessing does not therefore meet the criteria of philosophical investigation. Nonetheless, since our knowledge of the world, as Ibn Sīnā shows us, is based on non-communicable types of intuitions, i.e., primary concepts, which cannot be further explained but must be taken as the foundation of all explanation, we cannot push the argument of non-communicability too far.[89]

But how does the mystic convey his experience? He does this by employing tropes, allegories, and similes. Here we are confronted with a perennial dilemma of language-versus-

experience. The dilemma is that mystical knowledge and all other comparable forms of experiential knowledge are communicable only as second-order concepts. The mystic can have a genuine experience. But he cannot present it as an unmediated state of consciousness. What an interlocutor can perceive of the mystic's experience is this mediated form of thought, which is a kind of public knowledge and no longer the experience itself. The moment we turn experience into a statement of any kind, whether poetical, allegorical or didactic, it loses its immediacy and becomes a conceptual representation. Given Ṣadrā's belief that concepts, while indispensable for organizing human thought, distort reality for reality is always more than what we can say of it conceptually, we can understand his relentless effort to give his reasons for going beyond the merely rational. Yet, this is where the words fail the mystic. This is also where we run up against the limits of language. Hence the mystic's utter disappointment with human language. But this is a price the mystic should be prepared to pay otherwise he will have to revert back to the original meaning of the word 'mystic' and 'keep his mouth shut.'

3.2. KNOWLEDGE AS FINDING EXISTENCE

The definition of knowledge as a 'mode of existence' (*naḥw al-wujūd*) points to another direction in Ṣadrā's epistemology. By casting knowledge in terms of existence and its modalities, Ṣadrā tries to achieve several goals. The first is to draw out the implications of a metaphysics based on the centrality of existence. This makes all philosophical thinking an exercise in ontology. The second goal is twofold, and it is to overcome the subjectivist tendencies of the Mutakallimūn on the one hand, and the representational theory of knowledge of Ibn Sīnā, on the other.

To begin with the latter, Ṣadrā's first objection to the Kalām view of knowledge as a 'relation' (*iḍāfah*) is that it reduces

knowledge to a property of the knower.[90] Ṣadrā believes that the Mutakallimūn are mistaken in holding that knowledge is 'a quality related to the soul (*kayfiyyah nafsāniyyah*).'[91] This definition goes against Ṣadrā's concept of knowledge as unification and participation. Knowledge as relation runs the risk of depriving intellection of any substantial content because 'relation lies outside the essence of everything'[92] and it is 'one of the weakest accidents to exist; in fact, it has no existence in the external world.'[93] Secondly, it assumes a non-cognitive content for objects of knowledge prior to their intellection by the mind, which goes against the definition of existence as inherently intelligible and axiological. As for the representational theory of knowledge, it not only fails to adequately address such issues as self-knowledge and God's knowledge of things but also falls short of bringing out the existential-spiritual dimension of knowledge.

Instead of working through the vocabulary of representation, impression and relation, Ṣadrā defines knowledge as a modality of existence: 'Knowledge is a kind of existence. As a matter of fact, knowledge and existence are one and the same thing.'[94] We have already seen that the essential identity of existence and knowledge is a logical extension of Ṣadrā's axiological ontology. As the source of all valuational terms, existence is consciousness and intelligibility *par excellence*. The etymology of the word *wujūd* provides additional support for this interpretation. The word *wujūd* comes from the root verb 'w-j-d' and means 'finding'; its fourth form *awjada* means 'to be found.' The Persian word *yāftan*, meaning 'to find,' is used as a synonym for *wujūd*.[95] In both cases, 'finding' implies consciousness and awareness: one has to have consciousness to be able to find something. Furthermore, consciousness, in the Husserlian sense of the term, is always the consciousness *of something*, and this entails an 'openness, directedness to the other, and denial of self-foundation. In this way consciousness appears to be not pure interiority, but should be understood as a going-out-of-itself, as ek-sistence.'[96]

The word *wujūd* is also related to two other key terms, *wajd* and *wijdān*. *Wajd* literally means ecstasy and refers to the finding of the Real (*al-ḥaqq*). Ibn al-'Arabī goes so far as to say that 'in the view of the Tribe, *wujūd* is finding the Real in ecstasy.'[97] *Wijdān* is a particular case of both finding (*wujūd*) and ecstasy (*wajd*) in that it refers to the 'unexpected occurrence of God' and His manifestations.[98] While *wijdān* signifies knowledge and consciousness, the plural *wijdāniyyāt* refers to the soul and its internal faculties (*al-quwwah al-bāṭinah*) when the soul attains the state of the pure intellect.[99] There is also the word *ījād*, God's bestowal of existence upon contingent beings, which entails the idea that things cannot be devoid of meaning because they have been created by an intelligent agent for a purpose. This is where Ṣadrā unites the argument of 'what-ness' (*mā-huwa*) with the argument of 'why-ness' (*limā-huwa*) because to be able to say properly *what* a thing is, is to say *why* it is and acknowledge its source.[100] The unassailable relationship between the existence and meaning of something is established by the intrinsically intelligible reality of existence.

While the identification of existence and consciousness plays a central role in Ṣadrā's cosmology, it also leads him to develop what we might call a doctrine of ontological vitalism. In this view, all things including inanimate objects have some degree of consciousness by virtue of the fact that they exist. Not to be confused with a Bergsonian *élan vital*, attributing some kind of life and consciousness to the entire cosmos including inanimate objects is an old idea in cosmological thinking.[101] In Ṣadrā, the issue is thoroughly ontological, and rests on a simple syllogism: existence entails consciousness; existents partake of some aspect of existence; therefore all things have some degree of life and consciousness. As he puts it, 'whatever is established in existence is capable of being intelligible even potentially,'[102] Ṣadrā believes that existence and knowledge penetrate the whole scale of being but 'the majority of intelligent people are incapable of understanding the penetration of knowledge, power, and volition in all things including stones and inanimate objects just like the

penetration of existence in them.'[103] Just as individual existents partake of existence in differing degrees of existentiation, their degree of vitality and intelligence depends on their ontological intensity. In short, the more 'beingful' a thing is, the more life and consciousness it has. The entire cosmos is alive and has awareness, Ṣadrā insists, but each individual being participates in this cosmic vitality at different levels. Thus 'the intellect in man is different from the intellect in other living beings.'[104] Everything is interrelated through the penetration and expansion of existence: 'The abode of existence is one, and the whole universe is a big living being. Its dimensions are conjoined with one another but not in the sense of the conjunction of measurement and the unification of surfaces and environs. Rather, what is meant is that each degree of existential perfection must be adjacent to a degree that befits it in (a similar) existential perfection.'[105]

In a section of the *Asfār* entitled 'Of the proof that all things are in love with God the Exalted, yearn for meeting Him, and how they reach the abode of His munificence,' Ṣadrā expands on the ontological vitalism of things and ties it with cosmological love. Love here refers to the innate tendency of things to reach their natural perfection. This perfection changes in every being depending on their mode and state of existence. Yet, the essential trait of love and yearning for perfection remains unchanged because 'no caused being can subsist except through its cause, for it is its perfection and completion.'[106] In the hierarchical order of things, all things yearn for their perfection which functions as their perfect form and final *telos*. This hierarchy of 'gradual completion' underlies the cosmological journey of all beings from stones and animals to separate intellects and angels. Thus 'the hylé is completed through its form, the form through its forming agent (*muṣawwir*), the sense through the soul, the soul through the intellect, and the intellect subsists through the Necessary Being.' In Ṣadrā's words, 'love (*al-'ishq*) penetrates all beings' because

> life penetrates all beings due to the penetration of existence in them. We have also stated before that existence as a single reality is the same as knowledge, power and life. An existing being cannot be conceived without the nature of existence in a general way. By the same token, an existing being cannot be thought of as having no knowledge and action, and whatever knows and does, regardless of how, has life. In conclusion, according to the sages (*al-'urafā'*) everything is alive. But when the majority of people look at an animal, all they see is nothing but its external senses and its volitional movement from one place to another. *Asfār*, III, 2, p. 150

There is a clearly religious component in assigning life to all things. The Qur'ān (17: 44) describes the world of nature in vitalistic terms when, for instance, it refers to 'what is in heavens and earth' as praising God and prostrating before Him. Referring to this, Ṣadrā says that 'in our view, existence in a general sense is identical with knowledge and consciousness in a general way. Because of this, the Divine Gnostics hold that all beings are cognizant of their Lord and prostrate before Him.'[107] In responding to a question about how animals and plants exercise certain actions and why we do not perceive their consciousness, Ṣadrā expresses his dissatisfaction with the views of the 'philosophers of Persia and many of the ancients' on the issue, and goes on to say that 'we argue that all animal, plant and inanimate natures have knowledge and consciousness by themselves, through the necessities of their essences, and their particular effects on account of their partaking of existence because existence is identical with light and manifestation. Existence is therefore united with the qualities of the perfection of existence in knowledge, power, volition, life, and the like.'[108] Not surprisingly, Ṣadrā criticizes Suhrawardī for holding that 'no corporeal being (*al-jism*) is alive by itself; every corporeal being in itself is dead and dark.'[109]

The upshot of Ṣadrā's cosmological vitalism is the construction of life and intelligibility as an effect of existence. In the processes of knowing through intuition, experience or simple syllogism,

we respond to this penetrating aspect of existence and articulate its various modalities. Existence-qua-existence precedes objects as well as their meaning-properties. Ṣadrā takes this to mean that the philosopher has to begin with existence and work his way back to the various modalities of cognition. This projection is underlined by the relegation of knowing, one of our prime modes of interacting with the world, to one of the modalities of existence. In this framework, every act of knowing is a step toward disclosing a particular aspect of existence. True, we create mental depictions of things through abstract and universal concepts. We may even follow Aristotle's lead and construe knowledge as conceiving universal patterns by which the world is constituted.[110] Our primary encounter with the world, however, is a concrete and particular one, and cannot be reduced to abstractions. This is so because 'perception is nothing more than the soul's attention to and witnessing of what is perceived. [But] witnessing takes place not through a universal but a particular form.'[111]

In a similar vein, existence defies conceptualization for its ever-expanding and dynamic act cannot be captured in the abstract and discursive deliverances of the mind. This is why 'the concept of existence in things is that it is something that has existence whereas in itself it is existence itself.'[112] As a second-order statement, I can divide actual entities into essence and existence, and attribute abstract-universal properties to them. But existence, as we perceive it through its particular modalities, does not lend itself to such a schematization because 'the reality of existence cannot be obtained in the mind. What obtains in the mind concerning existence is only a mental consideration [i.e., concept], and it is an aspect [of existence] among its aspects. The true knowledge of existence is based on witnessing and presence.'[113] The danger of mistaking the *concept* of existence for its *reality* is to turn it into an object, and then talk about it as if it *was* an object to which various properties can be assigned *a posteriori*. For Ṣadrā, this is the fundamental error of

Suhrawardī's metaphysics of essences as well as the fallacy of the representational theory of knowledge.

In knowing things, we interact with the world but this interaction does not begin or end with the mind. Nor can this experience be relegated to objects-qua-objects. Rather, what we interact with is the myriad of the modalities, states, degrees, and relations of existence. In knowing and articulating things through second-order concepts, we are responding to something that is not us, viz., our subjective deliberations about the world, but a realm of existence of which we are a part. It is the all-inclusive and 'dynamic' reality of existence that provides this context for us. To explain how existence penetrates all things while remaining the main point of reference in them, Ṣadrā borrows several key terms from Ibn al-'Arabī including the 'flow of existence' (*sarayān al-wujūd*),[114] 'expanding existence' (*al-wujūd al-munbasiṭ*),[115] and the 'Breath of the Compassionate' (*nafas al-raḥmān*).[116] Each of these designates a particular 'act' of existence and indicates the various modalities and contexts within which existence as a singular reality comes to be particular. Its 'encapsulation' (*shumūl*) of all things is also a particular act of existence not to be confused with the generality of a universal: 'The existence's encapsulation of things is not like the universal's encapsulation of particulars but through expansion (*inbisāṭ*) and flow (*sarayān*) in the temples of essences in such a way that no full description of it can be given.'[117] That is why existence cannot be limited to any of its modalities:

> It is firmly established that the Necessary Being by itself is necessary from all points of view. There is no contingency in its all-inclusive essence. It is found with all beings without any delimitation and multiplicity. Therefore it is in everything and not in anything, at every moment and not in time, in every place and in no place; it is all things and not anyone of them. *Asfār*, III, 2, p. 332[118]

At this juncture, Ṣadrā divides existence into three categories: things either belong to 'pure existence' (*al-wujūd al-ṣirf*),

‘attached existence’ (*al-wujūd al-muta‘alliq*), or ‘expanding existence’ (*al-wujūd al-munbasiṭ*):

> There are three levels for things in their existentiation (*al-mawjūdiyyah*):
>
> The first is the pure existence whose existence is not mixed with anything else. Existence which is not conditioned by anything is called by the sages (*al-‘urafā’*) the Invisible Identity, the Absolute Invisible, and the Absolute One. It has no name and attribute, and no knowledge or perception is attached to [i.e., comprehends] it. All that is attributed to it as name and representation is only a concept existing in the mind and or estimation…. Things that are attached to Its Essence are the conditions of Its manifestation, not the causes of Its existence…
>
> The second level is the existent that is related to other things. It is conditioned existence with an additional attribute [attached to it], and qualified by limited conditions such as intellects, souls, celestial spheres, elements, and other composite beings including man, animals, trees, inanimate objects and other particular beings. *Asfār*, I, 2, p. 327

These two levels of existence pertain to the Absolute Existence, which is ultimately God and to the world of contingent substances, respectively. To connect the two levels of reality, Ṣadrā introduces a third category, the ‘expanding existence,’ which penetrates all existence and makes things what they are while it itself remaining unchanged and unaffected.

> The third level is the absolute expanding existence whose comprehensiveness (*‘umūm*) is not based on abstract universality (*kulliyyah*) but on a different mode. Existence is sheer realization and actuality whereas a universal (*kullī*), whether natural or intellectual, is ambiguous and needs the addition of something to it for its realization and existence. The unity of expanding existence is not numerical (*‘adadī*), which is the beginning of numbers. It is a reality that expands in the temples (*hayākil*) of contingent beings and the tablets of quiddities. It is not confined to a single particular attribute nor a determinate definition such as eternity and temporal

origination, priority and posterity, perfection and deficiency, cause and effect, substantiality and accidentality, disembodiment and corporeality.

Rather, it becomes determined by itself without the addition of anything else with all of the existential determinations and external realizations. It is better to say that external realities are generated from the degrees of its essence and modes of its determinations and states. It is the principle of the cosmos, the sphere of life, the Throne of the Merciful, The Real Through Whom Creation Takes Place (*al-ḥaqq al-makhlūq bihi*)[119] in the tradition of the Sufis, and the truth of all truths. In its very unity, it becomes many with the multiplicity of existents united with quiddities. Thus it becomes eternal with eternal, temporally originated with temporally originated, intelligible with intelligible, and sensible with sensible. In this regard, people think that it is a universal but it is not. Expressions used to explain its expansion on the quiddities and its comprehensiveness of existents are deficient signs [and it cannot be expressed] except through symbol and similitude. *Asfār*, I, 2, p. 328

Speaking of accident as that which depends on something else for its existence, Ṣadrā states that 'we cannot imagine the independence of something from existence in its subsistence and realization.'[120] In fact, nothing escapes the penetration of existence including non-being because existence is the 'most comprehensive of all things on account of its inclusiveness and penetration of the quiddites to the extent that it is even predicated of the concept of the absolute non-being (*al-'adam al-muṭlaq*), addition, potentiality, capacity, poverty, and other concepts of non-being.'[121]

This leads us to what we might call a 'metaphysics of relations': everything in its essential constitution is related to the larger reality of existence. Ṣadrā goes so far as to say that contingent beings *vis-à-vis* the Necessary Being are nothing but 'pure relations' (*rawābiṭ maḥḍah*).[122] Ṣadrā's metaphysics of relations places meaning within the context of ontological gradation: things have intelligibility in proportion to their state of existence. Meaning is revealed within the larger framework of existence and its modalities. The term 'relational existence'

(*al-wujūd al-rābiṭī* and *al-wujūd al-ta'alluqī*) underlies this point, and refers to existence as particular instances of its self-delimitation (*ta'ayyun*),[123] as opposed to 'absolute existence' (*al-wujūd al-muṭlaq*), which refers to existence-qua-existence (*wujūd bimā huwa wujūd*).[124] That is why Ṣadrā insists on determining the ontological status of things as weak or strong, prior or posterior, actual or potential, and perfect or imperfect to reveal their meaning and intelligibility. This brings us one more time to the threshold of defining knowledge as disclosing existence. In a rather lucid passage, Ṣadrā comments on man's place in the universe as an act of disclosure, and knits the microcosms and the macrocosms into one single whole:

> All existence from its highest to the lowest and from its lowest to the highest is [united] in a single relationship by which some parts of it are related to some others. Everything is united in spite of their external diversity. Their unity is not like the conjunction of corporeal bodies whereby their goals are conjoined and their surfaces linked. Rather, the whole universe is one single animate being (*ḥayawān wāḥid*) just like a single soul, and its active potencies are like the intelligences, the souls and the like as the potencies of a single soul…man is the last being with which the world of nature is sealed…in man are gathered the truths of the higher and lower worlds and it is he who has added to the total truth of the world the truths of the True One (*al-Ḥaqq*) from His Names and Attributes with which man's great vicegerency in the macro-cosmos is affirmed after his lesser vicegerency in the world of nature. *Asfār*, II, 2, pp. 349–350

Rather than being discrete and atomistic units, things, both animate and inanimate, are linked to the 'relational existence' on the one hand, and to 'absolute existence,' on the other. In this view, the world is no longer an aggregate of individual entities and a collection of independent objects set against the knowing subject that presides over them. Rather, these ontological relations are constitutive of reality itself.[125]

One important conclusion we can draw from the premise that the immediate subject of knowledge is 'relational existence' is

that meaning is now reconstructed as a 'state' that comes about in the various modalities of existence. When I perceive the tree in front of me and analyze its properties, I do not simply examine a physical object but disclose a particular aspect of existence as it is related to this particular object in the form of relative and limited existence. The nexus of ontological relations determines the context within which a particular aspect of existence is disclosed, and this applies *mutadis mutandis* to the process of knowing: the knowing subject does not interact with the world as a *tabula rasa* shorn of relations and meanings. Instead, it encounters a world which is already derivative of relational existence. While relationality is an essential function of particular objects, it is also a ubiquitous component of how we perceive things. Since existence is involved in every act of perception as expanding, delimited or relational existence, we cannot perceive particular objects in complete isolation from the sets of relations within which we find them.

Taken to its logical end, this view breaks down the conventional barrier between 'perceiving through particulars' and 'thinking through universals.'[126] For instance, I cannot think of a tree as a particular object without knowing what it means to call something 'tree' and 'particular object.' By the same token, I cannot think of particular objects without placing them within a larger context of relations within which the meaning of being 'a particular object' is obtained. In short, we fall back on a kind of 'aporetic ontology' where we perceive individuals as individuals and as instances of a whole, i.e., as both a particular and part of a universal at the same time.[127] This lends support to Ṣadrā's claim that the world is given to us as initially structured and saddled with universal patterns, attributes, and relations. In contrast to the radical distinction between 'facts' and 'values,' it is by explicating these structures and relations that the knower can grasp the reality of things *as they are*, thus overcoming any radical boundary between 'bare facts,' for which Ṣadrā has no words in his vocabulary, and meanings. Given the extreme significance of this metaphysics of relations, we can see why

Ṣadrā is never tired of discussing the relationship between contingent and necessary, lower and higher, body and soul, soul and the intelligible world, and finally the intelligible world and God.

We have already seen that sense perception provides us with the raw material of intelligibility, and the mind peruses the world through this material. If this is true, then we can not be in a position to perceive the world as 'empty,' or as nothing more that what Galileo had called 'primary qualities.' In contrast to epistemological subjectivism which holds that all we can know in sense perception are our own 'states of mind,' or 'ideas' in the Lockean sense of the term, Ṣadrā's epistemological realism would not allow such a radical cleavage between perception and reality. Rather, it would argue for what Mandelbaum calls 'naïve realism' which holds that 'the actual qualities of such [physical] objects are not different from those which we ascribe to them on the basis of sense perception.'[128] This strongly pre-modern view is consistent with the view that existence and its particular modalities are saturated with meaning already *before* they are processed in sense perception.

Aristotelian hylomorphism, which was a cornerstone of medieval realism, lends support to this conclusion. If 'sensation is the disengagement of form from matter'[129] and form is what gives meaning and structure to things,[130] then some kind of intelligibility must be operative in sense perception by which we sense what Locke calls the 'bare facts' of the world. It is impossible to conceive such a thing as 'pure matter,' for all experience is mediated through intellection, memory, recollection, estimation, and so on. This suggests that the world presents itself to us through forms that are themselves structures of meaning, and these structures are first perceived and processed in sense perception. This is not to suggest that the senses themselves create meaning; Ṣadrā's Platonic conceptualism would not allow that. As Plato argues, 'perception…can never be the same as knowledge.'[131] The senses convey units and packages of meaning contained in sensible objects without actually *knowing* them:

'All external senses are like a messenger conveying its message without realizing that it is conveying a message. The sense of sight carries the message of the form of colors and conveys them. But it perceives neither the *meaning* of color nor the fact that it is conveying it' (emphasis added).[132] Thus it has been said that 'whoever has lost sense has lost knowledge.'[133]

Here we are faced with the biggest challenge of the skeptic: if the mind can only perceive the universals (i.e., quiddities), and the senses cannot know what they perceive (i.e., the physical objects), then how do we know that what we know as the world in our minds is the same as the world itself? If, as Hume says, 'nothing can ever be present to the mind but an image or perception, and…the senses are only the inlets, through which these images are conveyed, without being able to produce any immediate intercourse between the mind and the object,'[134] then all the mind can know is itself or its internal states, not the physical world. Al-Fārābī seems to have no qualms about this when he says that 'in short, the sensible objects cannot be known, and the sensibles are parables for what is known' and 'a parable is different from what it is a parable of.'[135] If this is the case, then how can we be sure that what we perceive in sense perception is not the internal states of our minds but a world independent of us?

Skepticism had never had a fashionable history in Islam. The Muslim philosophers hardly took the skeptic's questions seriously as meriting much philosophical reflection. Ibn Sīnā is known for suggesting to throw the skeptic into the cold waters of a river to realize his foolishness. Ṣadrā's advice to the skeptic is to see a doctor before making more blunders in philosophy.[136] Wittgenstein appears to agree in a more moderate voice: 'A doubt without an end is not even a doubt.'[137] This can be attributed to the confidence of medieval realism which not only believed in the reality of a world independent of our minds but also insisted that the world is essentially intelligible because it is ultimately derived from existence. This medieval optimism was also coupled with the religious outlook of Abrahamic monotheism

which conceived the world as a teleological work of art by a benevolent and intelligent artisan.

Having said that, Ibn Sīnā addresses this very question posed by the skeptic, and admits the difficulties of overcoming the difference between what the mind perceives as concept, which is all it can do, and what the world is like in itself. He begins by reiterating the commonly accepted view that what is involved in perception is not the physical object itself but a representation (*tamthīl*)[138] of it in the mind due to the 'impossibility of the transposition of [corporeal] natures in and of themselves from one matter to another.'[139] I can perceive a tree only as a representation, not as an actual physical object inside my mind. When we say that 'I have sensed an external object,' what we mean is that 'its form is represented in my sensation.'[140] What I am able to transmit through my senses is not a physical object but its abstract form. Ibn Sīnā admits that 'because of this it is difficult to affirm the existence of sensate qualities in physical entities.' He even cites Democritus and his students who 'have not accepted the existence of these qualities' in physical entities but, instead, relegated the differences in sense perception to the differences caused by the 'shapes' (*ashkāl*) of atoms.

This suggests that we are trapped in the internal states of our minds and cannot prove that what we perceive is actually the world itself, not some stimuli or sense-data caused by it. Ibn Sīnā's answer is short and at first appears to be a badly formulated one. He works out what appears to be a moderate version of the causal theory of perception, and says that 'we know with certainty' that different objects cause different sensations in us. This means that sensate qualities cannot be attributed only to my sensation of them. Even if we accept Democritus' view, we would still be affirming the independent existence of sensate qualities because we cannot empirically prove that these 'shapes,' which are supposed to account for different types of sensations such as seeing, smelling and hearing, are interposed between physical objects and my perception of them.[141] The atomistic view of perception can be

true only for the sense of touching where we touch the different configurations of the atoms to which Democritus refers. But, as Ibn Sīnā warns, the Democritan view cannot be accepted without reducing 'all sensation to touching.'[142]

Ibn Sīnā does not spend too much time to prove the fallacy of epistemic subjectivism because he, like Ṣadrā, believes that there is no such thing as 'pure experience' available for sense perception. Both philosophers implicitly reject the empiricist myth of the Given that sensation is based on the raw material of experience unaltered and unaffected by *a priori* processes of thought, intellection, ordering, estimation, and so on. The sense-data that we receive from the external world are not mere 'impressions' devoid of contexts of intelligibility. In contrast to Locke's 'simple ideas'[143] and Hume's 'impressions,' the sense-data do not enter the mind as the 'raw material' of the world, which then enables us to form an *idea* about it. As Kant would argue through his 'transcendental deduction,' these simple ideas or impressions come to us as structured units *about* the world within the coordinates of time and space.[144] Kant's maxim that 'thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind'[145] stresses the same point: we cannot intend to the world as 'pure fact' through some sort of pure sensation.

Ṣadrā shrugs off the skeptic's epistemic attack by mobilizing his Platonic conceptualism. For him, neither our subjectivity *vis-à-vis* the world nor the all-inclusive and penetrating reality of existence would allow the possibility of seeing the world as a kind of pure sensation in the empiricist sense of the term. The question of whether we can ever cross the gap between what I perceive through sense-data and what the world is in and of itself never arises for him. He insists that 'the intellective forms of substances that actually exist in the external world are the very meanings of these realities and their essences.'[146] He goes so far as to equate the Peripatetic concept of the form (*ṣūrah*) with existence (*wujūd*), thus overcoming the hylomorphic duality of matter and form.[147] The 'meaning' (*ma'nā*) and 'sensate form' (*ṣūrah maḥsūsah*) of physical objects cannot then be two

separate ontological realities but two different aspects of corporeal beings insofar as how we perceive them. In short, the skeptic's question is an ill-formulated one because sense perception *already* takes place within a larger context of relations and structures of meaning. To explain this, Ṣadrā introduces the concept of 'illuminative and perceptual form' supplied by the 'giver of forms' (*wāhib al-ṣūwar*), whose function is to mediate between the 'world' and the 'mind':

> Sensation (*iḥsās*) comes about through the emanation of an illuminative and perceptual form from the Giver (*al-wāhib*)[148] by which perception and consciousness are made possible. Therefore it is sensing (*ḥāss*) in actuality and sensible in actuality before which there is neither a sensing nor sensible [object] except potentially. As for the existence of the form in a particular matter, it is one of the preparatory conditions (*al-mu'iddāt*) for the dawn of this form which is the sensible and the sensor in actuality. The argument for this form's being a sense, sensing and sensible is the same as the argument for the intellective form's being an intellect, intellector and intelligible. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 317

All of this suggests that we encounter the world as saddled with meaning already at the level of sense-perception because we cannot perceive physical objects without their sensate forms, and these forms are themselves structures of meaning. More importantly, the difference between the two modes of existence, sensate-material and intellectual, is not one of category but degree.[149] Ṣadrā quotes an interesting passage from the *Theology of Aristotle*, which states that 'these senses are weak intellects and these intellects strong senses,' implying a strict hierarchy in the faculties of knowledge.[150] Ṣadrā employs the Peripatetic language of 'capacity' (*isti'dād*) to make his point:

> There is no doubt that sense perceptions necessitate the act of sense organs and the acquisition of sensible forms either in the sense organs themselves as it is unanimously accepted or in the soul through their manifestation, which is the right view. This takes place thanks to the capacity of the matter of sensation. The touching of

> our hands, for instance, feels the heat and is affected by it because of the capacity in it. Sensation takes place in seeing through the form of what is seen thanks to the capacity in it. Likewise, sound comes about in the ear thanks to the capacity in it. Sense organs have nothing but sensation and it is due to the occurrence of the sensible form in them or in the soul because of their effect. Sense organs or the sensate soul, insofar as they are sense organs, cannot know that the sensible has an existence of its own in the external world. This can only be known through experience. Thus it is the function of the intellect or the thinking self and not that of sensation or imagination [to know the independent existence of things outside the mind]. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 498

In this context, every act of knowing calls for a prior grounding of things in existence, and this leads us to another key aspect of Ṣadrā's philosophy. In contrast to Descartes who would place the mind as 'a pure substance that thinks' over against a world of pure matter, Ṣadrā takes our primary way of interacting with things as 'finding existence,' i.e., disclosing existence in its various manifestations. Knowing the world as concept or as experience cannot therefore dodge the question of the penetration of existence for 'existence is what constitutes things. If there was no existence, there would be nothing in the mind or in the external world.'[151] Consequently, Ṣadrā agrees with Dāwūd al-Qayṣarī's explanation of how existence is related to knowledge:

> The occurrence of knowledge in every knowing subject comes about only by means of it (i.e., existence). In this, it claims priority over anything else. Furthermore it is existence which necessitates all perfection and through which such qualities as life, knowledge, will, power, hearing, seeing and the like take place. And it is living, knowing, free in its choice, powerful, hearing and seeing by itself, not by means of something else. Thus, everything acquires its perfection through it. Dāwūd al-Qayṣarī, *Muqaddimāt*, p. 31

There is nothing revolutionary about the idea that things must exist in some fashion *before* we can know them. Making

existence a condition of all cognition, however, goes beyond common sense realism and subsumes all knowledge under existence, which is what Ṣadrā seeks to achieve. We can state this point as follows: to grasp the reality of X is to stand in a certain cognitive relation to the *existence of* X, which is ultimately existence particularized in the *form* of X. Knowledge is not so much cognition of some kind, although it is that too, as encounter with existence through witnessing, seeing, unveiling, and presence. The primacy of existence as developed into an epistemology prevents Ṣadrā from the danger of forging a 'subjectivizing ontology,' and pre-empts the possibility of positing a disengaged subject that can interact with the world as a 'pure substance' without itself being a part of it. Reversing this process has been the course of modern philosophy since Descartes, and has led to what Charles Taylor calls the 'ontologizing of rational procedure.' Defining existence in terms of how we know the world has resulted in an ontology of subjectivism where '…what were seen as the proper procedures of rational thought were read into the very constitution of the mind, made part of its very structure.'[152] As a result, the attempt to provide an epistemological ground for ideas without a prior ontological grounding is bound to result in a philosophy of subjectivism, which posits the knowing subject as the 'objectified' criterion of external reality.[153]

In conclusion, Ṣadrā's ambitious attempt to define knowledge as a mode of existence allows him to place noetics under ontology and prevents his epistemology from collapsing into a philosophy of subjectivism. This Ṣadrā achieves by holding fast to his gradational ontology. Instead of defining existence as something fused with 'intelligibility,' he reverses the picture and posits the intellect as something filled with 'existence' for it is the all-inclusive reality of existence that generates the world of corporeal bodies on the one hand, and the world of pure intelligibles, on the other. When 'existence reaches the level of the simple intellect completely disengaged from the world of physical objects and quantities, it becomes all of the intelligibles

and all things in a way that is superior and nobler than its previous state.'[154] It is this aspect of existence that turns knowledge into a mode of disclosing existence in its myriad modalities. This makes knowledge an act of participation rather than representation, an experience of witnessing rather than abstraction. And this asserts once more the futility of epistemology without a proper ontology.

NOTES

1. See, *inter alia*, Henry Corbin, *Kitāb al-mashā'ir/Le Livre des pénétrations métaphysiques*, pp. 62–79; Alparslan Açıkgenç, *Being and Existence in Ṣadrā and Heidegger*, (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia: International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization, 1993); and Toshihiko Izutsu, *The Concept and Reality of Existence* (Tokyo: Keio Institute of Cultural and Linguistic Studies, 1971).
2. Or what Ernest Gellner calls 'a transcendental ego that is not in the world.' See his *Words and Things* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1960) p. 134.
3. Habermas' notion of the transcendent as the context of communicative action is a case in point. See, *inter alia*, his *The Future of Human Nature* (Cambridge, MA: Polity Press, 2003), pp. 10–11. Kant's 'transcendental philosophy' seeks to secure the non-empirical basis of human knowledge and thus carries little resemblance to Ṣadrā's 'transcendent philosophy' especially when it is considered with its religious implications. This is borne out in Kant's discussion of 'the idea of a transcendental philosophy' in his *Critique of Pure Reason*, tr. F. Max Muller (New York: Anchor Books, 1966), pp. 1–7. The same holds true for Husserl's otherwise profound analyses of the 'transcendent' as a framing concept of phenomenology. See his *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology: An Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy*, tr. with an introduction by David Carr (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1970).
4. This is part of a larger debate about how to read Islamic philosophy. The debate about Ibn Sīnā and whether he was a loyal Aristotelian, a closet Platonist or something different from both is well known and requires little explanation. A similar situation exists in regards to Suhrawardī and the School of Illumination. In contrast to the 'gnostic' readings of Corbin and Nasr, for instance, Hossein Ziai adopts an analytic approach in his readings of Suhrawardī. See his *Knowledge and Illumination*. For a similar yet more moderate point of view, see Mahdi Aminrazavi,

Suhrawardī and the School of Illumination, pp. xvii–xxi and Chapter 4. John Walbridge concurs with Aminrazavi in broad outlines. See his *The Leaven of the Ancients*, Chapter 3.

5. A good example of the first view is Fazlur Rahman. See his *The Philosophy of Mullā Ṣadrā*, pp. 3–7. Oliver Leaman takes a similar approach in his *A Brief Introduction to Islamic Philosophy* (Cambridge, MA: Polity Press, 1999), pp. 96–100.
6. *al-Mabdā' wa'l-ma'ād*, p. 5.
7. *Kasr*, p. 44.
8. *Kasr*, p. 11.
9. See, for instance, Ṣadrā's introduction to the *Maẓāhir*, p. 8, where he mentions God-fearing (*taqwā*), piety (*wara'*), and true asceticism (*al-zuhd al-ḥaqīqī*) as conditions for attaining true wisdom, i.e., knowledge of God. See also his discussion of invocation (*dhikr*) in *Kasr*, p. 43.
10. Seyyed Hossein Nasr is the most prominent defender of the second view. See his *Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī and His Transcendent Theosophy* (Tehran, Iran: Institute for Humanities and Cultural Studies, 1997), pp. 85–97; 'Mullā Ṣadrā: His Teachings' in S. H. Nasr and O. Leaman (eds.), *History of Islamic Philosophy*, (London/New York: Routledge, 1996) Vol. I, pp. 643–644; 'Mullā Ṣadrā and the Full Flowering of Prophetic Philosophy' in his *Islamic Philosophy from Its Origin to the Present: Philosophy in the Land of Prophecy* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2006).
11. Analysis of Ṣadrā's poetry is beyond the scope of this study. His poems have been edited first by Seyyed Hossein Nasr in *Seh Asl* (Tehran, 1961). Muḥammad Khājawī has collected and published more poems of Ṣadrā in his *Majmū'a-yi ash'ār* (Tehran, 1997). The most complete edition of Ṣadrā's poems is Muṣtafa Fayḍī's *Mathnawī-yi Mullā Ṣadrā* (Qom, 1997). Ṣadrā's poems combine philosophical, theological and mystical themes. For an analysis of Ṣadrā's poem on Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, for instance, see Muḥammad Ali Amir-Moezzi, 'Le Combatant du ta'wil. Un poeme de Mollā Ṣadrā sur Ali (Aspects de I'imamologie duodecimaine IX), in *Reason and Inspiration in Islam*, ed. Todd Lawson (London: I. B. Tauris, 2005), pp. 432–454.
12. *Kasr*, p. 21.
13. For more on the intellectual climate of the Safavids, see Said Amir, Arjomand, *The Shadow of God and the Hidden Imam: Religion, Political Order, and Societal Change in Shi'ite Iran from the Beginning to 1890* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984) and Hamid Dabashi, 'Mir Damad and the Founding of the "School of Isfahan"' in *A History of Islamic Philosophy*, Oliver Leaman and Seyyed Hossein Nasr (eds.), Vol. 1, pp. 597–634.

14. *Asfār*, I, 2, p. 344 where Ṣadrā groups the Ḥanbalis together with the *Mujassimah* school of Kalām in their falsely literalist interpretation of the allegorical expressions (*mutashābihāt*) of the Qur'ān.
15. For the Akhbārī-Uṣūlī debate, see E. G. Browne, *A Literary History of Persia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953), Vol. IV, pp. 374–376; David Morgan, *Medieval Persia: 1040–1797* (London and New York: Longman, 1988), pp. 159–161; Heinz Halm, *Shiism* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1991), pp. 97–103; Kathryn Babayan, *Mystics, Monarchs and Messiahs: Cultural Landscapes of Early Modern Iran* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), pp. 403–412; and Robert Gleave, *Scripturalist Islam: The History and Doctrines of the Akhbārī Shī'ī School* (Leiden, Holland: Brill, 2007).
16. Bertrand Russell, *Mysticism and Logic* (New York: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1957), p. 1.
17. Cf. Goodman, *Avicenna*, pp. 147–8. One Ibn Sīnā scholar goes so far as to claim that '…the foundations of Avicenna's theory of knowledge, like those of al-Ghazālī before him, are rooted in faith rather than in reason,' which I find to be too simplistic and unsubstantiated. See Sari Nuseibeh, 'al-'Aql al-Qudsī: Avicenna's Subjective Theory of Knowledge,' *Studia Islamica*, LXIX (1989), p. 41. For Ibn Sīnā's defense of intuition (*ḥads*) as the foundation of all cognition, see his texts quoted in Gutas, *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition*, pp. 161–168. For Ṣadrā's defense of the primary intelligibles (*al-awwaliyyāt*) as irreducible to any other concepts and/or experience, see *Asfār*, I, 3, pp. 443–445 where he rejects skepticism as an 'illness.'
18. Ibn Sīnā, *Ishārāt*, p. 48. For the English translation of *Maqāmāt al-'ārifīn*, see Shams Inati, *Ibn Sīnā and Mysticism: Remarks and Admonitions* (London and New York: Kegan Paul International, 1996), especially, pp. 81–95. Ibn Sīnā develops a similar theme in *Risālat al-ṭayr* by using an allegorical language. For the Arabic edition of the text, see Shokoufeh Taghi, *The Two Wings of Wisdom: Mysticism and Philosophy in the Risalat ut-tair of Ibn Sīnā* (Stockholm: Uppsala University Library, 2000), pp. 63–69; English translation, pp. 70–74. See also H. Corbin, *Avicenna and the Visionary Recital* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1960).
19. *Asfār*, II, 2, p. 204.
20. *Sharḥ*, Vol, I, p. 99. Ṣadrā then adds that Aristotle 'seems to be' the first to found the science of metaphysic with all of its parts.
21. For an analysis of Ṣadrā as a 'philosopher of revelation,' see Christian Jambet, *The Act of Being: The Philosophy of Revelation in Mullā Ṣadrā* (New York: Zone Books, 2006).
22. *Asfār*, I, 2, p. 315. In the *Kasr*, p. 13, Ṣadrā quotes Ḥallāj's response to a question about *burhān*: 'It is what descends (*wāridāt*) upon the heart which the souls are incapable of denying.'

23. Ibn Sīnā, *Ishārāt*, Vol. III, pp. 353–354.
24. Cf. Ṣadrā's fourfold division of the realms of perception, *Asfār*, I, 3, pp. 502–503.
25. Inati, *Ibn Sīnā and Mysticism*, p. 70.
26. *Asfār*, IV, 1, p. 139.
27. Ṣadrā quotes the saying in his commentary on Kulaynī's *Uṣūl al-kāfī*. He also refers to the spiritual extinction (*fanā'*) and subsistence (*baqā'*) of the soul as the last stages of the spiritual path: 'The last degree of those who follow the spiritual path is extinction in God by volitional death as it is said in the saying of the Prophet, may God's benedictions be upon Him: 'Die before you die.' Then it is subsistence with God and submerging in the vision of His Essence.' *Uṣūl*, p. 458. The idea of spiritual death and rebirth is clearly formulated in *Pheado* 67e where Socrates says that 'those who go about philosophizing correctly are in training for death.' For more on death as a spiritual exercise among the ancient Greeks, see Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, pp. 93–101.
28. Ibn Sīnā, 'A Treatise on Love.' tr. Emil L. Fackenheim, *Medieval Studies*, Vol. VII (1945), p. 212.
29. Cf. Nicholas P. White, 'Plato's Metaphysical Epistemology' in *The Cambridge Companion to Plato*, ed. Richard Kraut (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 284.
30. Pierre Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, p. 93.
31. Including Plotinus; cf. *The Enneads*, VI, 5.2.6–22.
32. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 58.
33. Rudolph Otto, *Mysticism East and West* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1960), p. 34.
34. Otto, *Mysticism*, p. 33.
35. *Asfār*, I, 2, p. 330.
36. *Asfār*, I, 2, p. 332. Having established God as the True Being, Ṣadrā quotes three verses, all in Persian, from the three mystical poets of Islam. He quotes from Farīd al-Dīn 'Aṭṭār, the author of the *Conference of the Birds* (*Manṭiq al-ṭayr*), the following verse: 'The Lord is one whose existence is His very Essence/All things are nothing but the book of His Signs.' From Firdawsī: 'The universe is Thy sublimity and humility/I know not what is Thy being.' From Rūmī: 'We are non-beings pretending to be/Thou art the Absolute being appearing as our existence.'
37. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 504.
38. al-Fārābī, *Kitāb al-millah*, ed. Muhsin Mahdi (Beirut, Lebanon: Dār al-Mashriq, 1991, 2nd edition), p. 52. Cf. also his *Tanbīh 'alā sabil al-sa'ādah*, ed. Saḥbān Khalīfah ('Ammān, Jordan: al-Jāmi'at al-Urdūniyyah, 1987).
39. Ibn Sīnā, *Ishārāt*, Vol. III, p. 327.
40. al-Ghazālī, *The Book of Knowledge*, tr. Nabih Amin Faris (New Delhi, India: International Islamic Publishers, 1988; original edition 1962), p. 221.
41. Cf. Rosenthal, *Classical Heritage*, p. 219.

42. Ibn Sab'īn, *Budd al-'ārif*, ed. George Kattūra (Beirut, Lebanon: Dār al-Andalus and Dār al-Kindī, 1978), pp. 320 and 324.
43. Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn Zakāriyya' al-Rāzī, *The Book of the Philosophic Life*, tr. Charles E. Butterworth, *Interpretation*, (Spring 1993), Vol. 20, No. 3, p. 229. See also Butterworth's analysis 'The Origins of al-Rāzī's Political Philosophy' following the translation of al-Rāzī's treatise; pp. 237–257.
44. *Asfār*, IV, 2, p. 123.
45. Compare this with the following quote from Dāwūd al-Qayṣarī: 'And it [i.e., existence] is pure goodness, (*khayr maḥd*). Whatever is good is good by and through it. And it is the constitutive ground of things in and of itself. (…) And it is pure light (*nūr maḥd*) because it is visible by itself and makes other things visible. Everything is perceived through it. (…) All perfection becomes conjoined with things only through the medium of existence in and of itself. And it is living, self-subsisting, knowing, willing, and powerful by itself, not by an attribute added to it *a posteriori*.' *al-Muqaddimāt* in *al-Rasā'il* ed. Mehmet Bayraktar (Kayseri, Turkey: Kayseri Metropolitan Municipality, 1997), pp. 31 and 39.
46. See also *Shawāhid*, pp. 258–260.
47. In the *Shawāhid*, pp. 217–222, Ṣadrā gives an interesting genealogy of the idea of the disembodiment of the soul and its superiority to the body. After quoting a number of verses from the Qur'ān, traditions of the Prophet of Islam, and the sayings of Greek and Islamic philosophers, he ends with several quotes from the Sufis. He presents the quote 'the Sufi is with God without time' as a good explanation for the meaning of 'disembodiment,'
48. Cf. *Uṣūl*, p. 461.
49. Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, p. 99.
50. *Uṣūl*, p. 373.
51. *Kitāb al-sa'ādah*, p. 412, quoted in Rosenthal, *Classical Heritage*, p. 202.
52. Ibn Sīnā, 'On the Rational Soul' in Gutas, *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition*, p. 75.
53. *Asfār*, IV, 2, p. 138.
54. Cf. *Uṣūl*, pp. 383–386.
55. *Asfār*, I, 1, p. 20.
56. *Asfār*, I, 1, p. 20. Abū Bakr al-Rāzī defines philosophy in the same way, which is the aim of his 'philosophic life': '…This whole speech is what is meant by the statement of all philosophers: 'Philosophy is making oneself similar to God, may He be glorified and magnified, to the extent possible for a human being.' And this is the sum of the philosophic life.' 'The Book of the Philosophic Life,' p. 234.
57. *Asfār*, I, 1, p. 11.
58. *Asfār*, IV, 2, p. 140.

59. Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, p. 101.
60. 'Every mental form is a universal even if it is particularized through a thousand particularizations.' *Kāshāniyyah* in *Majmū'ah*, p. 128.
61. *Mashā'ir*, p. 24. This is what al-Ghazālī means by the 'science of unveiling' (*'ilm al-mukāshafah*). Cf. *The Book of Knowledge*, p. 223 and *Ma'ārij al-quds*, pp. 99–105
62. *Asfār*, I, 1, p. 53. This echoes Ibn al-'Arabī: 'As for the relation of our knowledge to God the Exalted, it is of two kinds. Knowledge of the Divine essence is based on witnessing and vision (*ru'yah*) but this is not a comprehensive vision.' *Futūḥāt*, I, p. 217
63. *Uṣūl*, p. 357.
64. *Kasr*, p. 33.
65. In the *Fuṣūṣ*, Ibn al-'Arabī devotes a full section to the heart under the section on Prophet Shu'ayb. See *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, ed. Nawāf al-Jarrāḥ (Beirut, Lebanon: Dār Ṣādir, 2005), pp. 74–79. For the English translation, see *The Ringstones of Wisdom*, tr. Caner Dagli (Chicago: Great Books of the Islamic World, 2004), pp. 125–138. For an analysis of heart as an epistemic and spiritual faculty in Ibn al-'Arabī, see James Winston Morris, *The Reflective Heart: Discovering Spiritual Intelligence in Ibn 'Arabi's Meccan Illuminations* (Louisville, KY: Fons Vitae, 2005), pp. 46–100.
66. *Asfār*, IV, 2, p. 133. This is very much in line with what Ibn al-'Arabī has to say about the relationship between heart and knowledge in *Futūḥāt*, I, p. 137.
67. Cf. *Asfār*, IV, 1, p. 137 where Ṣadrā refers to sense organs and faculties of perception as the 'soldiers of the heart' (*junūd al-qalb*).
68. The notion of heart as a faculty of knowledge is not confined to philosophers like Ṣadrā. The later Ash'arites consider the heart in a similar way. A good example of this is al-'Ījī and his commentator Taftazānī, both of whom define the 'locus of knowledge' (*maḥall al-'ilm*) as the heart. But unlike Ṣadrā, who assigns a more mystical function to the heart, Ījī and Taftazānī base their analysis solely on the Qur'ānic verses mentioned above. See the section called 'the locus of knowledge is the heart' in Sa'd al-Dīn al-Taftazānī, *Sharḥ al-maqāṣid*, ed. A. 'Umayra (Beirut: 'Ālam al-Kutub, 1989), Vol. 2, pp. 330–331.
69. *Asfār*, III, 2, p. 18.
70. There is an apparent contradiction here: if being virtuous is a condition of attaining true knowledge, then how can we be virtuous without knowledge in the first place? Ṣadrā answers this question by appealing to degrees and stages of knowledge. See *Asfār*, IV, 2, p. 231.
71. *Asfār*, IV, 2, p. 134.
72. *Asfār*, IV, 2, p. 201.
73. Cf. *Asfār*, IV, 2, p. 139.
74. *Asfār*, I, 2, p. 315.

75. Commentary on the Chapter al-Wāqi'ah, *Tafsīr*, Vol. 7, p. 10.
76. 'Sound knowledge is not given by reflection, nor by what the rational thinkers establish by means of their reflective powers. Sound knowledge is only that which God throws into the heart of the knower. It is a divine light for which God singles out any of His servants whom He will, whether angel, messenger, prophet, friend, or person of faith. He who has no unveiling has no knowledge.' Ibn al-'Arabī, *Futūḥāt*, I, 218, 19, quoted in Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, p. 170.
77. Compare Afḍal al-Dīn Kāshānī's remarks: 'Know that intelligible meanings endure by their own essences. It is not simply that they have a joining with the knower's soul. Rather the knower has a joining with them. Were they attached to the knower's soul, no knower would be able to teach someone what he has come to know, and were he to teach it, his knowledge would be nullified. It would not be possible for anyone to reach the meaning and know it; but all this is possible and likely. Hence, none of the meanings and mental things are joined with and endure with the knower's essence. Rather, meanings are realities through their own essences. This is why they are called 'meanings'—they are what is 'wanted' from and 'signified' by the words. In respect of the essences, they are realities; but in respect of having a relation with the souls, they are forms.' *Muṣannafāt*, 645, quoted in William Chittick, *The Heart of Islamic Philosophy*, p. 174.
78. According to Ṣadrā, Ibn Sīnā sees the soul as a fixed substance because he denies 'transformation (*inqilāb*) in substances, especially in those that do not have matter.' See *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 442. This makes the Avicennan concept of abstraction even less suitable for explaining how the soul reaches higher stages of intellectual and moral perfection. Cf. *Ittihād* in *Majmū'ah*, p. 74. See also *Asfār*, IV, 1, pp. 135–136 where Ṣadrā attributes Ibn Sīnā's static concept of the soul to his ontology.
79. *Asfār*, IV, 1, p. 132.
80. *Asfār*, IV, 2, p. 180. In speaking of man as a being destined to become a pure spiritual substance, Ṣadrā makes profuse use of another typically Sufi term and refers to the perfect man (*al-insān al-kāmil*) as the epitome of the mystic's journey toward God. 'The vertical ascent towards the Exalted One does not terminate until [one undertakes] the spiritual wayfaring (*sulūk*) of the universal man.' See *Asfār*, IV, 2, p. 284. On Ṣadrā's use of the concept of the perfect man, see also *Asfār*, II, 1, p. 294; III, 2, pp. 7, 17, 20–21, 32, 40, 103, 181–191; IV, 1, p. 140; and IV, 2, p. 41.
81. *Asfār*, I, 2, p. 323 quoting from Hamadānī's *Zubdat al-ḥaqā'iq*.
82. *Asfār*, I, 2, pp. 323–324.
83. *Asfār*, III, 1, p. 263.
84. *Uṣūl*, p. 438.

85. Ibn Sīnā, 'On the Rational Soul' in Gutas, *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition*, pp. 77–78.
86. Ibn al-'Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, p. 76.
87. Ibn al-'Arabī, *Futūḥāt*, I, 261, quoted in Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, p. 169.
88. *Asfār*, I, 1, p. 115; Ṣadrā quoting from Shahrazūrī's *al-Shajarat al-ilāhiyyah*.
89. Ṣadrā concurs that primary concepts cannot be derived from experience. As a typical Platonic intellectualist, he defines the sensibilia (*al-maḥsūsāt*) as intelligibles in potency. Cf. *Shawāhid*, p. 205.
90. Cf. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 376 where Ṣadrā responds to Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's view of 'knowledge as relation' (*ḥālah iḍāfiyyah*).
91. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 311.
92. *Kāshānīyyah* in *Majmū'ah*, pp. 130–131.
93. *Shawāhid*, p. 243.
94. *Asfār*, III, 1, p. 150; also I, 3, p. 291.
95. Cf. Chittick, *The Heart of Islamic Philosophy*, pp. 42–43.
96. Joseph J. Kockelmans, 'Some Fundamental Themes of Husserl's Phenomenology' in *Phenomenology: The Philosophy of Edmund Husserl and Its Interpretation*, edited by Joseph J. Kockelmans (New York; Anchor Books, 1967), p. 36.
97. Quoted in Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, p. 212. See also Sajjad H. Rizvi, 'Mysticism and Philosophy: Ibn 'Arabī and Mullā Ṣadrā' in Peter Adamson and Richard Taylor (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Arabic Philosophy* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 224–246.
98. Muḥammad 'Alī ibn Muḥammad al-Tahānawī, *Kashshāf iṣṭilāḥāt al-funūn*, (Beirut, Lebanon: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1998), Vol. 4, p. 292. The words 'existence' and 'ecstasy' in European languages have a similar etymological history. The Latin *existere* means to 'stand out.' If existence signifies 'ek-sistence,' viz., 'going out of' non-existence, ecstasy signifies going out of one's ordinary consciousness. Heidegger takes up this meaning of existence in his *Letter on Humanism*.
99. al-Tahānawī, *Kashshāf*, p. 293.
100. Ṣadrā's commentary on the Chapter al-Sajdah in *Tafsīr*, Vol. 6, p. 45.
101. Aristotle, however, is notoriously opposed to attributing any intelligence to animals. Cf. *De Anima*, 404b, 433a and *Metaphysics*, 980b. For the historical development of this theme in Western philosophy, see Richard Sorabji, *Animal Minds and Human Morals: The Origins of the Western Debate* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993), especially, pp. 12–16.
102. *Ittiḥād* in *Majmū'ah*, p. 71.
103. *Asfār*, III, 1, pp. 335–336.
104. *Shawāhid*, p. 176.
105. *Asfār*, II, 2, p. 342.

106. *Asfār*, III, 2, p. 149.
107. *Asfār*, IV, 1, p. 164.
108. *Kāshāniyyah* in *Majmū'ah*, p. 137.
109. *Asfār*, IV, 1, p. 26.
110. Cf. Goodman, *Avicenna*, p. 136.
111. *Asfār*, III, 1, p. 162; also pp. 250–251.
112. *Asfār*, I, 1, p. 41.
113. *Asfār*, I, 1, p. 61. See also *Asfār*, I, 1, p. 412–413; I, 3, p. 388; and II, 1, p. 230.
114. Cf. *Asfār*, I, 1, pp. 67, 146, 381 and I, 2, p. 327.
115. *Asfār*, I, 2, pp. 328, 331–333 and III, 2, pp. 10–11.
116. *Asfār*, 3, II, p. 5; I, 1, p. 47, 164, and 381. The term 'Breath of the Compassionate' has been used by Ibn al-'Arabī to explain the creation and subsistence of the universe with God's 'breath.' See, Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, pp. 127–130 and *The Self-Disclosure of God: Principles of Ibn al-'Arabī's Cosmology* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), pp. 69–70.
117. *Maẓāhir*, pp. 26–27.
118. Ṣadrā gives a similar endorsement of the transcendent unity of existence when he says that 'His ipseity (*inniyyah*) the Exalted is His essence (*māhiyyah*) the Exalted, and His existence the Exalted is the existence of everything. His existence is the truth of existence without there being in it any stain of non-existence and multiplicity.' *Maẓāhir*, pp. 24–25.
119. For this term in Ibn al-'Arabī, see Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, p. 133.
120. *Asfār*, I, 1, p. 258.
121. *Asfār*, I, 1, p. 260.
122. Cf. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 37 where Ṣadrā discusses the ontological status of relational beings (*al-iḍāfāt*) as completely dependent upon the Necessary Being.
123. Compare Dāwūd al-Qayṣarī's following remarks: 'Existence, insofar as it is being, is predicated of all relational beings (*al-wujūdāt al-muḍāfah*) because we say that: [this particular] being exists. And whatever is predicated of things has to have a relationship of unity and difference towards them. In the case of existence [as predicated of things], that which unites [i.e., the principle of unity] is nothing but existence, and that which differentiates [i.e., the principle of difference] is again existence itself.' *Muqaddimāt*, p. 36.
124. Cf. *Asfār*, I, 1, p. 141, 291, 327; I, 3, p. 249; II, 1, p. 217. Dāwūd al-Qayṣarī has the following comment on this aspect of existence: 'Know that existence in so far as it is existence, viz., existence-qua-existence (*min ḥaythu huwa*) is different from external and mental existence. Each of these (modes) is a species of it. Therefore existence in so far as it is existence, namely existence not conditioned by anything (*lā bi-sharṭ*

shay') is not limited by absoluteness and delimitation. [In this sense], it is neither universal nor particular, neither general nor specific, and neither one with a [numerical] oneness added to its essence [*a posteriori* and from outside] nor many. On the contrary, it necessitates these things [i.e., these qualities] in accordance with its degrees and stages to which God refers as 'He is the one who raises the degrees and possesses the Throne.' And it becomes absolute, conditioned, universal, particular, general, specific, one and many without being any change in its essence and reality.' *Muqaddimāt*, p. 29.

125. Cf. *Asfār*, III, 2, pp. 113–114 where Ṣadrā also provides a short argument for this world as being the best of all possible worlds.
126. For a defense of this view, see Brian John Martine, 'Relations, Indeterminacy, and Intelligibility' in R. C. Neville (ed.), *New Essays in Metaphysics* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987), pp. 237–252. See also his *Individuals and Individuality* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984).
127. Booth, *Aristotelian Aporetic Ontology*, p. 5.
128. Maurice Mandelbaum, *Philosophy, Science, and Sense Perception* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1966), p. 118.
129. *Shawāhid*, p. 208.
130. Cf. *Asfār*, I, 3, pp. 313–314.
131. *Thaetetus*, 184–187.
132. *Kāshāniyyah* in *Majmū'ah*, p. 132. Cf. *Avicenna's Psychology*, p. 43 where Ibn Sīnā expresses the same idea in more economical terms.
133. *Kāshāniyyah* in *Majmū'ah,* p. 134.
134. Quoted in Mandelbaum, *Philosophy, Science, and Sense Perception*, p. 124
135. al-Fārābī, *Jawābāt*, p. 104.
136. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 445.
137. L. Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1969), Paragraph 625.
138. Cf. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 360.
139. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 316.
140. *Shifā'*, *Ilāhiyyāt*, p. 62.
141. This objection has been raised against the causal theory of perception as defended by Russell and Price. See, Winston Barnes, 'The Myth of Sense-Data' in R. J. Swartz, *Perceiving, Sensing, and Knowing* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1965), pp. 143–145.
142. *Shifā'*, *Ilāhiyyāt*, p. 63.
143. John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Peter H. Nidditch (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1975), Book II, Chapter 2, 1–3.
144. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, tr. Norman Kemp Smith (London: Macmillan, 1973), Part I, Book I, Chapter II, 22–23. Cf. also

Charles Taylor, *Philosophical Arguments*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), pp. 71–72. This view would later be called *intentionality*.

145. Kant defines intuitions as 'bits of experiential intake,' which are our channels of knowledge to the physical world. In modern philosophy, this has led to the well-known 'dualism of scheme and given' (or content). Cf. John McDowell, *Mind and World* (Harvard University Press, 1994), pp. 4–7.
146. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 306.
147. *Ittiḥād* in *Majmū'ah*, p. 90.
148. *al-Wāhib* refers to *wāhib al-ṣuwar*, the giver of forms, which is ultimately God and which supplies things with their intelligible forms and ontological meanings. Cf. *Shawāhid*, p. 242.
149. Cf. *Asfār*, I, 3, pp. 298–299. Ṣadrā's view of the soul as 'corporeal in its origination, spiritual in its subsistence' is in tandem with his attempt to define material and non-material (i.e., mental) states as modalities of existence: 'In its primordial disposition (*fiṭrah*), the human soul is at the penultimate end of the corporeal world in terms of sensate perfection and at the beginning of the spiritual world in terms of intellective perfection.' *Shawāhid*, p. 204. Ṣadrā further develops the same theme in *Mafātiḥ*, Vol. II, pp. 622–623 and says that 'the soul of man is like a bridge extended between the two worlds (of corporeal and spiritual existence).'
150. *Shawāhid*, p. 167.
151. *Asfār*, I, 1, p. 260.
152. Charles Taylor, *Philosophical Arguments*, p. 61.
153. Cf. Guignon, *Heidegger and the Problem of Knowledge*, p. 58.
154. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 373.

APPENDIX

Treatise on the Unification of the Intellector and the Intelligible

(*Risālah fī ittiḥād al-'āqil wa'l-ma'qūl*)

Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhim ibn Yaḥyā al-Qawāmī al-Shīrāzī

A Note on Translation

The following translation of Mullā Ṣadrā's treatise entitled *Risālah fī ittiḥād al-'āqil wa'l-ma'qūl* is based on Ḥamid Nājī Iṣfahānī's critical edition published in *Majmū'a-yi rasā'il-ī falsafī-yi Ṣadr al-muta'allihīn* (Tehran, Iran: Intishārāt-i Ḥikmat, AH 1375), pp. 63–103. Nineteen manuscripts of the *Risālah* have been found in the libraries of Tehran, Qom, Mashhad, Najaf, and Hamadan.[1] The editor has used the manuscripts found in the Kitabkhāna-yi Markaz-i Dānishghah, Kitābkhāna-yi Mulk, and the personal libraries of Quddūs Raḍawī and Āyat Allāh Sayyīd 'Izz al-Dīn Zanjānī. In paragraphing the translation, I followed the Arabic edition. The page numbers in brackets correspond to Iṣfahānī's pagination.

[1] **Treatise on the Unification of the Intellector[2] and the Intellected[3]**

[3] In the Name of God, the Infinitely Good, the All-Merciful

Gratitude is for the Giver of knowledge and wisdom, and benediction is upon the instrument of generosity and compassion, and upon his family of Imāms who are the treasury of the secrets of the *Sharī'ah* and religion, and the protectors of the lights of knowledge and certitude.

After that, this [tract] is a magnificent sign from among the signs of God's wisdom and providence, and a perfect pearl from among the ocean of the jewelry of His generosity and mercy, concerning the critical investigation (*taḥqīq*) of the question of unity between the intellector and the *intelligibilia*, and the question that the active intellect is all existents (*mawjūdāt*). These two noble issues are among the most difficult problems of metaphysics so much so that they are like the two eyes and two ears through the power of which the forms of things are seen. Or, they are like two luminous stars by which everything in the world and the heavens is illuminated. Both of these issues have been mentioned in the language of some of the ancients (*al-mutaqaddimīn*).

The minds of all the later philosophers were incapable of understanding them as they sharpened the teeth of their language in accord with the approach of those who debased these two matters and drew the weapons of defamation and repudiation. They tormented themselves in [order to] rebuke [this view], openly declaring [their] censure and hate. But they do not listen to the word of (certainty)[4] nor is it clear to anyone of them the reason [why they do this] so that this could be a deliverance for them from their vilification, and an abstention for those who have participated in this defamation. But alas! They have increased their denial and insisted on this in the most stubborn way. Attributing this grave error about what inhibited the perception of the great majority of the people of learning to those who have some experience in the art of learning is a kind of [4] heedlessness and haste, and abstention from the path of proper direction, patience, and fairness. The haste for man is the act of Devil: 'Do not approach be in haste with the Qur'ān before it has been revealed unto thee in full' (Qur'ān 20:114).

Clinging to the robe of firm standing and asking for the descent of the rain of mercy in the world of lights is by far preferable to promptitude in denial. And commencing [one's inquiry] with the grace of the One who possesses the key of mercy and salvation is worthier than sealing the path of deliverance to the face of students capable of attaining happiness and grasping the truth and what is right. In this tract, we are going to present in a summary form what we have explained concerning the truth of this problem in our great book called *The Four Journeys* as an approximation of the matter to the minds [of readers] and explanation of our purpose for 'everyone who has a heart, or everyone who lends ear, and he is a witness' (Qur'ān 50:37). God is surely the guardian of innocence and confirmation.[5]

In regard to the organization of what we mention in the [following] two discourses (*maqālah*), we say that each of them comprising several chapters is pillars and principles for the sciences.

[5] **The First Discourse Concerning the Unity of the Intellector and the Intelligible, and It Is Comprised of Several Chapters**

Section (1)

On the Degrees of the Theoretical Intellect in Tandem with the View of Alexander of Aphrodisias.[6]

The intellect has several stations[7]:

One [of them] is the material intellect (*al-'aql al-hayūlānī*). The philosophers mean by the material a subject which can transform into something else either as a sensible or intellectual [substance] through the being of a form in it. The

essence of everything, which has the potentiality of becoming something else, has to be actual from the point of view of what it is as a [concrete] thing. Even if such a thing were to contain the potentiality of all things, its essence will have to be itself so that there would not be [another] form for it among the forms. [6] And it would be pure potentiality with no actuality except what occurs to it from outside. When it assumes a form through [an actual] form, it becomes united with it in such a way that there is no duality between the two. This holds true for the *sensibilia* as we see in the case of the matter (*hayūlā*) of physical bodies, which are in and of themselves denuded of all forms. As it is explained in the science of metaphysics, this matter is also identical with these physical species and their simple and composite individuals. It has already been demonstrated that composition between matter and form is a kind of unity as this is the accepted view among the verifiers (*al-muhaqqiqīn*).[8]

The same holds true for the material intellect in comparison to the *intelligibilia*. The material intellect in itself is not an intelligible substance *in actus* nor one of the intelligible things before it comes into actuality. It is, however, one of the sensible things *in actus* and all of the intelligible things *in potentia*.[9] The soul is thus the form of perfection for the species of the sensible body such as man, which, in contrast to the primary matter, is capable of perceiving all things together. The primary matter in itself is not a sensate (*ḥissiyyah*) or intellective (*'aqliyyah*) thing. It has to represent every sensate object one after another. The human soul is therefore [like] a form in relation to the matter of the *sensibilia*, and matter in comparison to the form of the *intelligibilia*. In itself, viz., before it perfects [i.e., actualizes] itself into a sensate entity, it is not an intellective thing as it is said in the word of He the Transcendent: 'People of the Book! You have no valid ground' (Qur'ān 5:68).[10] It is therefore a sensate form and intellective matter, and a material intellect in itself. Thus it is potentially all of the *intelligibilia* for it is capable of perceiving them all.

The percipient (*mudrik*) must be one of its own objects of perception in actuality and because of its nature otherwise its particular form would be an obstacle for perceiving anything other than this nature. This is like the [7] senses that do not perceive things that have a part of them in what they perceive. The faculty of sight, for instance, perceives colors but not its own color. Therefore the instrument in which this faculty is found and by which perception takes place does not have a particular color. The instrument of smelling, by which smelling objects are perceived, does not have a smell. In the same way, touching, through which the elementary forms of the *sensibilia* are perceived, has to be in balance in such a way that it is not conjoined with any [of the *sensibilia*] in an excessive and complete way so that everything can be perceived by it. It has been said that whatever is in balance between opposites is the same as being free from them. These instruments, however, do not perceive things that are similar to them in hotness or coldness, moisture or dryness, softness or roughness. This is due to the fact that nothing can be a

body, especially an elemental body (*'unṣūriyyah*), unless it has a share in the opposites. Every natural body is without doubt tangible, and it cannot perceive its like or its opposite because opposites cancel each other out. This difficulty, however, is resolved in the case of touching, as we have pointed out before. We have explained this matter in its respective place, and this is not the place to go into its exposition again.

In sum, the goal is [to show] that since in [the domain of] the *sensibilia* nothing can have potentially only one relationship to the whole because it cannot be free from the actuality of some of them in itself, there cannot be one [single] external sense perceiving all of the *sensibilia*. For every sense is one single form in actuality. But there is among the existents something which is a potential intellect in relation to all of the *intelligibilia*.[11] This is the case before it becomes an intellective form. Then its existence is a sensate existence, a material form, and an intellective matter. When it is actualized in one of the *intelligibilia*, it becomes united with it, and becomes one of the intellective entities (*al-ashyā' al-'aqliyyah*).

[8] Know that there is a difference between the matter of the *sensibilia* and the matter of the *intelligibilia*, which is the following: in contrast to the matter of the *sensibilia*, it is a characteristic of the matter of the *intelligibilia* to come into actuality in all *intelligibilia* at once whereas the matter of the *sensibilia*, in its passage from potentiality to actuality in these forms, is a new thing not in an instant but in time and motion. And this is so for two reasons.

The first reason: the sensible-qua-sensible has a weak existence, in which the opposites take place. A sensible object cannot be a horse, tree and stone [at the same time] because its existence cannot contain two realities [simultaneously] and [cannot accept] the unity of two forms, let alone [accepting] all realities and forms. Rather, it takes on only one form because of its being a measured thing, each measured parts of which are separate from its other measured parts.

The second reason: sensate natures are in constant renewal, passage and cessation from one being to another. If it were possible for them to be all things in one single substance, they would not remain moving, could not have had the expected perfection [in them], and would have had the intellective rather than the bodily form.

It has been firmly established and proven that whenever the matter of the *sensibilia* in a certain form has come into actuality from potentiality, it has returned from actuality to potentiality in some other things. This is like the parts of motion and time, some of whose existence necessitate the non-existence of the other,[12] or like the parts of physical bodies and space, the presence of which requires the absence of the other. But this is not the case with the matter of the *intelligibilia*, which, whenever it arises from potentiality into actuality in a particular thing, assumes a stronger relation and proximity to other *intelligibilia*.

The second degree [of meaning] for the intellect is that by which the soul achieves the capacity of passing from primary to secondary [intelligibles], and from self-evident truths to theoretical statements through these primary [intelligibles] obtained by means of [9] senses and imagination. It is through the occurrence of this capacity in it that the soul is able to take the forms of the *intelligibilia* from the objects of imagination and obtain theoretical statements from self-evident truths just like those who have the capacity of arts and crafts and who are able to know their own work by themselves.

The first one, I mean the material [intellect] is like these people. [A better example] is rather those who have a latent [lit., 'distant'] capacity by which they accept the[ir] ability for arts and crafts until they become artisans as in the case of children and those who are as yet incomplete in their development. As for this capacity, it is found in those who have perfected themselves and become counted among the people with intelligence (*'uqalā'*).

The third degree [of meaning] is the active intellect, and it is through it that the material intellect comes to possess the capacity of passing [from potentiality to actuality]. As Aristotle says, this active [intellect] can be compared to the ray of light because the ray is the cause of visible colours *in potentia* in that they become visible in actuality [through it]. By the same token, this intellect affects the material intellect, which is potential, in such a way that the faculty of intellectual conception (*taṣawwur 'aqlī*) becomes established in it, and then turns material forms, which are potential, into intelligibles in actuality. This third [i.e., the active intellect] is intelligible by its own nature, and it is in actuality whether an intellect intellects it or not. This is so because it is the agent of intellectual conception,[13] and it transfers material intellect into an actual intellect. As such, it is the active intellect because the material [i.e., potential] forms, which are intelligible only *in potentia*, become actually intelligible through it when this intellect disembodies them from the matter that is co-existent with them. Before this, they are neither intelligible [in actuality] nor is it in their nature to be so. Similarly, it is by virtue of light, which makes vision possible and emanates upon the faculty of sight that this capacity becomes seeing in actuality and a source of existence for physical bodies and colours, which are visible in view of it and which were visible before only potentially. In the same manner, light, by definition, is visible and makes things visible. It is impossible for it to be otherwise or *in potentia*. In fact, it is always actual in this way.

When this illuminating and intellective light shines upon the potential intellect, it becomes an intellect in actuality, and when it shines upon the imaginal or sensible forms that correspond to it, they all become [10] intelligible in actuality. This is simply impossible not to be so. Because of this, as it shall become clear to you, God willing, there has to be an intellector here.

Section (2)

Concerning that Intellection Consists in the Unification of the Intellector with the Intelligible.

I say, and success is from God: forms of things are of two kinds. The first is the form whose existence is supported by bodily matter. The forms of this kind can neither be intelligible nor sensible for their existence is the same as veiling and absence because of their sharing in the meaning of non-existence whereby the existence of everything in this [category] is equal to the non-existence of the other, and the presence of each part necessitates the absence of the other. Knowledge consists of the existence of something for something else, and its presence in it.[14] How can then something that does not have an existence in itself be existent for something else? Therefore this kind of forms cannot be perceived except through the acquisition of another form whose likeness is to be found only in concept [i.e., in the mind] and whose opposite is in the order of existence.

The second kind is the forms whose existence is not supported by matter but rather disembodied from it whether it has a relational connection to matter or not. This has two aspects. As for the carrier of the capacity of perception concerning its external matter such as the *sensibilia*, the instrument in which we find the capacity of the existence of this actual sensible form has a positional relation to its external matter, and this relation becomes particular through the attainment of this form for the sense[s]. Thus, these forms are related to their particular and sensate forms as we see in the case of estimations (*mawhūmāt*) and imaginations. Or, this form has no connection and relational or positional attachment to matter. This is because of its extreme purity and disembodiment from matter, and also because of its individuation by its particular existence and the existence of its perfect instaurer (*jā'il*)[15] which does not need any aides from outside and extraneous accidents added to it.

[11] Don't you see that when something from among the physical bodies and their forms is taken to be an individuated unit, it would neither have anything extraneous to its essence nor the other things around it would remain existent! An example of this is the following. If we were to suppose a sky or an encircling object with nothing in it, it would not exist because of the necessity of void. If we were to suppose a land or an encircled thing with no sky to raise it up, it would not exist because this being would of necessity have nothing to make it something determinate whereas existence [as determined in the external world] is a physical body with extension. Or, physical bodies would have aspects and extensions without something making their aspects and extensions determinate. All of this is impossible.

It has become clear that things of this kind need accidental and coincidental (*ittifāqiyyah*) causes as they are in need of essential causes. That is why this world has been called the world of coincidences (*'ālam al-ittifāqiyyāt*). As for

the intellective existence, it is not in need of accidental causes that are extraneous to its nature and which distinguish its substance [from others].

Once this is established, we say: it is certain according to the philosophers that the disembodied form as a universal is an actual intelligible form. In the same way, the disembodied form as disembodied in general is either a sensible in actuality or an imaginal [object] in actuality. The proof [for the assertion] that every disembodied form as a universal is an intelligible in actuality is that if it were not to be so, it would be impossible for it to intellect actually or potentially, or it would be possible for it to do so. The first is not tenable because whatever is established in existence is capable of being intelligible even potentially. The second is not tenable either because that which can receive something as an accident is not established for it in actuality. In the same manner, non-existence is something among the causes of the existence of this thing, either because of the absence of something from the side of the agent or because of the inability of the receptor. The first is impossible because the agent acting upon intellective forms is a complete reality and essence, in which there can be no shortcoming, deficiency or inability. The second is also impossible because disembodied forms do not have a specific locus. They do not accept or allow change, nor permit the possibility of something that has not been already actualized. This is due to the fact that things of this order are to be found only in the world of motions, [12] changes, matters, and potencies. Our initial assumption, however, was that this form is a disembodied one with no relation to matter, change, transformation, or movement.

It has thus been established that the existence of every disembodied form in itself is its actual intelligible existence. It is also known on the basis of sound intuition that the existence of every sensible form in itself is its very sensibleness (*maḥsūsiyyah*), which is its existence for the sensate substance. Also, the existence of every imaginal form in itself is its existence for imagination. Even if we suppose that intelligibility is removed from the forms which we had assumed to be intelligible, this does not make them a thing among other things like a planet, tree, animal or plant.

The same holds true for imaginal and sensible objects. Their intellective existence is nothing but the manifestation of things in the mind or in the soul, and their existence becomes an intellective and intelligible light, not that through which existential quiddities [i.e., quiddities *in concreto*] become intelligible in actuality. The same analogy can be made concerning the imaginal or sensate form in that it is an imaginal light by which things are imaginalized, or a sensate light by which the *sensibilia* are manifested and become sensible in actuality.

When this is the case, viz., the intelligibility of the intelligible is of the very kind of the existence of the intellector and nothing else and, by the same token, the existence of the sensibleness of the sensible is exactly the same as the sensate substance and nothing else, it becomes necessary that the intellector be just like this intelligible, not different from its existence. If there were to be an

existence for the intellector and another existence for the intelligible form, which is intelligible in actuality, and thus we have two beings totally different from one another, each having a separate existence for itself, as most people assume, then this would lead to an impossible situation. Because when we look at the intellective form and consider it [in itself] and then turn our eyes from the intellecting substance, [then we have to ask]: is it, in this consideration, intelligible—as it was in and of itself—or not? If it is not intelligible in this consideration, then its mode of existence is not the same as its intelligibility, which means that it is intelligible only in potentiality, not in actuality. What we have considered to be correct, [namely the view] that its being is the same as [13] its intelligibility, is contrary to this [conclusion]. If, in this regard, only this [form] is intelligible as considered in isolation from all other things whose existence is different from it, then in this consideration it certainly is an intellector. Intelligibility is not separable from intellector-ness (*'āqiliyyah*) because both belong to the category of attribution (*al-muḍāf*). None of the attributed elements can have a meaning without its corresponding part.[16] Therefore one single being is both an intellector and an intelligible. Every form that is disembodied from matter is both intelligible and intellecting without there being any difference between the two meanings from the point of view of existence. But there is a difference insofar as meaning and conception is concerned because the concept of intellector-ness is different from the concept of intelligibility. Otherwise, the two words would be synonymous.

As for the fact that one single being is the subject of two different or even more meanings, this is not to be repudiated as in the case of the essence of the exalted One who, with His absolute unity, is the subject of the meanings of His Names and Attributes without there being any stain of multiplicity. It then follows that when one single intellector can have multiple intelligibles, its very existence becomes identical with the existence of those *intelligibilia* insofar as they are *intelligibilia* in themselves without there being any multiplicity and differentiation in existence. The same analogy applies to the unity of the sensate substance with all of its sensible forms as well as to the unity of the faculty of imagination with all of the imaginal forms.

The fact that various perceptual forms, whether intellective, imaginal, or sensate, have one single identity, existing by virtue of one single existence, in spite of their disparity and difference, is one of the wonders of the secrets of existence. A rigorous proof has been established for this and it cannot be denied by anyone engaged in [this discussion] on the basis of the judgments of sound thinking unless one drifts away from this way to another such as dialectic (*jadal*), imitation (*taqlīd*) and the like. 'And whosoever for whom God has not created a light has no share of light' (Qur'ān 24:40).

[14] *Section (3)*

Concerning the Finalization of What We Have Substantiated and the Confirmation of What We Have Established

Know that the state of the soul in its stages of sensate, imaginal and intellective perceptions is not like what has become common among the majority [of philosophers]. It is mentioned in the[ir] books that the soul is one in its essence and degrees whereas the perceptibles (*al-mudrakāt*) are different in their existence and opposite in their disembodiment (*tajarrud*) and bodily existence. The truth, however, is that every potency of perception is itself the very form of what it perceives when it is perceived in actuality.

It is a common view among them that the soul disembodies sensate forms, separates them from their matter with a kind of disembodiment, and becomes sensible in actuality. After that, it disembodies them with a more complete disembodiment and becomes imaginal in actuality. Then it disembodies them with a complete disembodiment and becomes intelligible in actuality. And the soul in itself remains the same as in the beginning without passing from being sensate to being imaginal and from being imaginal to being intellective. In this way, they make the soul unchanging, and its objects of perception passing and transforming.[17] The truth of the matter, however, is not like this. It is rather the opposite of what they have mentioned. It is closer to truth to make the differences of perceptual forms in various degrees of disembodiment and perfection subject to the transformations of the perceiver. That which is immersed in the veil of matter cannot perceive a form with which it is not covered. The fact that every reality related to a species, such as man for instance, becomes manifest to the potency of intellection at one time through one single intelligible form and to the senses through multiple opposite forms at other times, does not lead to the conclusion that in its existential modes the soul is subject to its own changes. Nor does it warrant the idea of making its differences and changes subject to the different states and transformations of the soul itself. This [view] is more fundamental and more appropriate.[18]

O the intelligent and smart one! Look at the soul, its existential modes and states, and its being united with a group of existents from this mode of existence [15] in every existential mode. It is of a bodily nature with the body, a sense with the senses, an imaginal [reality] with imagination, and an intellect with the intellect. 'And no soul knows where it shall die' (Qur'ān 31:34). When the soul is united with nature, it becomes the organs. When it is united with the senses in actuality, it becomes the very *sensibilia* that have come about for the senses in actuality. When it is with imagination in actuality, it becomes the imaginal forms that it has. This continues until it reaches the station of the actual intellect, and becomes the intellective forms that have obtained for it in actuality.

The wisdom behind this is that when God instaured in existence an intellective unity, which is the world of the intellect, and a physical multiplicity,

which is the world of the senses and imagination with degrees, the Divine Providence made it necessary to create a comprehensive being (*nash'ah jāmi'ah*), by which everything in the two worlds is perceived. And it designated for it a subtle potency corresponding to this all-encompassing unity. It is through this correlation that the perception [of the two worlds] is possible. And this [subtle potency] is nothing but the active intellect.[19] It also designated another physical or material capacity corresponding to this physical multiplicity whereby it perceives multiplicity as it is. But the soul in the initial stages of its origination is succumbed to the aspect of physical multiplicity due to its deficiency and imperfection, and as such its intellective unity is only potential whereas its physical multiplicity is actual. When its essence becomes strong and its activeness intensifies, the aspect of unity takes precedence over it, and it becomes an intellect and an intelligible after having been a sense and a sensible. The soul thus undergoes substantial motion from this first origination to the second and to what comes after it.

[16] *Section (4)*
Concerning the Close Examination of This Method and Allusion to God's Knowledge of Contingent Beings

You have already seen that the analogy of the intellect to the *intelligibilia* is like the analogy of the sense to the *sensibilia* even though it is not the case that the senses—faculty of sight, for instance—consist of the acquisition of the sensible form from matter. It is not true that sight takes something from what is seen, which passes from matter to the matter of sight because, as explained before, natural qualities cannot pass from one subject to another. Likewise, it does not mean that the faculty of sensation, such as vision, moves towards the form of the sensible that exists in matter as the defenders of the view of 'extromission' (*shu'ā'*) have assumed on the question of vision (*baṣar*).[20] It is to be noted that vision is neither a mere positional relation to the sensing subject nor a relation of knowledge that the soul has to this material form, as it was defended by the school of Illumination on the question of vision and by people like Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī concerning perception in a general sense. As we have explained in its due course, all of these three views are false in our opinion, especially the view [that defines vision] as relation. The positional relation concerning physical bodies and what is in them is neither their knowledge nor their perception. The relation of knowledge to intellective substances cannot be conceived in comparison to the essences of material subjects. We have already pointed to a general demonstration that nothing among the essences of material subjects can be a percipient of anything whatsoever except through a knowledge that encompasses their reasons and causes.[21]

The truth in our opinion concerning vision and all other forms of perception is that it comes about through the generation of a luminous and perceptual form

from the world of the soul by means of creative emanation (*al-fayḍ al-ibdāʿī*). It is through this [form] that the perception and consciousness of things comes about. When these forms are related to the senses, they are both sensing and sensed [17] in actuality. The forms of vision are neither an external matter nor they are imprinted in the instrument of vision. They are rather like hanging [in between], subsisting not in a locus and matter but through an active and luminous principle. As for the existence of the form in the external world, it is one of the conditions and preparatory circumstances for the coming about of this disembodied form at the level of the soul. The argument about this form being a sense, sensing, and sensed is like the argument about the intelligible form being an intellect, intellector, and intelligible. The same holds true for all other kinds of perception, sensible, imaginal, and intelligible.

The First Teacher [Aristotle] has said in the *Theology*: 'It is necessary to know that vision reaches physical bodies outside of it, and it does not reach them until it becomes identical with them. Then it senses and knows them with a sound knowledge in accord with the mode of its capacity [to perceive]. In the same way, when the person who intellects turns his eye to things *in concreto*, he does not reach them until he and the things [he sees] become one and the same thing except for the fact that sight falls upon the external form of things whereas the intellect falls upon the inner reality of things. For this reason, its unity with them is of various kinds. In some cases, it is more intense and stronger than the unity of the sense with the *sensibilia*. Every time the sight fixes its gaze upon a sensible object, what is sensed is effected by it until it becomes external to the sense, i.e., until it does not sense anything anymore. As for the intellectual vision, it is just the opposite.'[22] End of his words.

Know that through this method that we have followed on the question of knowledge—providence is by God the Exalted and His confirmation—many problems are resolved, and the objections that have been raised against the representation of the forms of things in His Essence the Exalted and their impressions in Him do not arise. The same holds true for the impression of these forms upon the essences of these intellects in the perception of the intellects. If intellection were through the impression of intellective forms upon the essence of the intellector, this would lead to horrible consequences for God's knowledge—His name be exalted—, which are mentioned in the books.[23] The fact that the form of a substance is impressed upon the intellecting substance would also necessitate the existence of one single form grouped under two categories, the category of substance and the category of quality. In the same way, the impression of [18] quantity, position and relation would of necessity lead to the inclusion of each one of them under two categories, and to many other problems mentioned in their due course.

Section (5)
Another Way of Explaining What We Wish to Establish

An established fact among the majority [of the philosophers] is that the faculty of intellection in man obtains the forms of the *intelligibilia* from outside of its essence after having not been an intellector in actuality. [According to them], this takes place without [the intellect] uniting with the forms, and transforming into them. This view is simply not tenable. When the soul is devoid of knowledge, ignorant in actuality, has the capacity of being effected by the *intelligibilia*, and meets the intellective forms and perceives them with an intellective perception, we say: when this capacity of being effected [by the *intelligibilia*] comes upon an intelligible form, with what does it perceive it and become related to it? Does it perceive an intelligible form by its own essence, which is bereft of knowledge and intellect? I wish I could understand how an essence denuded of [knowledge], ignorant and not illuminated by the light of the intellect can perceive a form outside of its essence, which is in the darkness whereas, in fact, it is a luminous form in itself and a pure intelligible!

If such an essence has perceived the forms with its denuded essence, then it follows of necessity that an ignorant and blind essence has perceived a pure intelligible, which is essentially separate from the essence of the percipient, in which case we have two essences separate from one another, an intellector in potentiality and an intelligible in actuality. But the two subjects of predication, insofar as they are the subjects of predication, have to be in one way or another equal in existence and non-existence and in potentiality and actuality. It is impossible for one of them to be potential and for the other to be actual. How can the blind eye look and see? With what light does it look at the visible lights and colours? Likewise, with which intellective light does the intellect see the intelligible and luminous objects of perception? 'And for whosoever God has not created light has no share of light' (Qur'ān 24:40).

If it has perceived them through an intellective form by which its essence has been illuminated, then the discussion turns into the relation of its [19] denuded essence to these forms in that its essence is dissimilar to these forms or subsistent through and united with them. Now, if it is dissimilar, then the difficulty mentioned before comes right back, and the forms are multiplied *ad infinitum*, which is impossible. If it is not dissimilar, then these forms are by themselves intellector in actuality as they are intelligible in actuality without there being the medium of any other form. This is exactly what we wanted [to establish].

It is not possible for the opponent to say that perhaps these forms are a means in the soul's being an intellector for things other than itself, and that they are intelligible for the soul itself, meaning that everything beyond the soul that has a correspondence with it becomes intelligible for the soul through this form.[24] We respond by saying that had this form not been an intelligible in the

first place, it would be impossible for it to perceive anything other than itself. The mediation of this form is not like the mediation of the instruments of arts and crafts in accomplishing bodily works.[25] Their example is rather like the sensible light in perceiving visible objects whereby first the light is seen and then through its medium other things are seen in a secondary and accidental way. We have already explained with a decisive proof that intelligible form is intelligible in actuality whether an intellect other than itself intellects it or not.[26] In the same way, one cannot assume a being for the sensible form which is itself not sensible. It is thus sensible in actuality even if there was no substance in the universe to sense it. The existence of intellective or sensate perceptual forms for the soul is not like the existence of a house, various possessions, and children in relation to the owner of the house, the possessions, and the father in that all of these have an existence in themselves and an existence for things other than themselves, and their existence in themselves is not by itself the same being for things other than themselves. Transformation of the soul into an intellector in actuality is not like the transformation of Zayd into having a property, a field and a child, in which case his existence does not change into another existence.

[20] *Section (6)*

Repudiating the Objection Against the Unification of the Intellector and the Intelligible, and Resolving the Doubt Mentioned in the Books of the Master [Ibn Sīnā][27] *and Others.*

Know that the Master stipulated the rejection of this unification in most of his books, and insisted on it in a strong way. In the *Ishārāt*, he said: ‘A group among the ancient [philosophers][28] held that when the intellecting substance intellects an intellective form, it becomes [identical with] it. Supposing that an intellecting substance intellects A. According to their view, it itself becomes cognizant of A. Now, has the intellecting substance remained the same before it intellected A or this has not happened to it [i.e., did it remain the same]? If it has remained the same, then it is the same whether it intellected A or not. If it did not happen to it, then it is not valid [to say] that it has changed into A or that it has become [identical with] its essence. If it has changed into A and its essence has remained the same, then this is like the other kinds of transformation, not like what they claim. If it is [identical with] its essence, then its essence has been dissolved and another thing has come about, not that it has turned into something else. When you ponder over this carefully, you will know that this [transformation] requires a common hylé and a composite rather than simple renewal.’[29]

He also said: ‘A further warning: when it intellects A and then B, has it remained the same before it intellected A so that it would be the same whether it intellected B or not, or it has become something else? This leads to what was mentioned before.’ End [of quotation].

This is a specific argument for refuting the unification between the intellector and the intelligible. They also have a general argument for rejecting any kind of unification between two things which the Master and others have mentioned in their books. It can be stated as follows: 'If two united things are two separate existents, then there is no unification. If one of them has ceased to be what it is and a new being has emerged, then there is no unification. If the two together have become non-existent and a third being has come about, then again there is no unification.'

[21] Then he said in the *Ishārāt*: 'There was a man among them known as Porphyry who wrote a book on the intellect and the *intelligibilia*, which is highly praised by the Peripatetics. All of it is gibberish. And they know very well that neither they nor Porphyry himself understand it. Someone among his contemporaries contradicted him. And he criticized this contradiction with [an argument] lower [i.e., weaker] than the first one.'[30]

He said in a section of the *Shifā'* on the science of the soul: 'One cannot say that the soul becomes the *intelligibilia*. In my opinion, this is something impossible. I have never understood their claim that something transforms into something else, and never figured out how this takes place.'

Then he mentioned the general argument for rejecting the unification [of the intellect with the *intelligibilia*], and begun to slander and repudiate any one who has accepted this unification by saying that 'the man who has explained[31] to people this matter the most is the person who has composed the *Isagogie* for them. He [i.e., Porphyry] was bent on speaking words of fantasy and Sufi poetry and contenting himself and others with imagination. For this, the people of discernment point to his books on the intellect and the *intelligibilia* and his other writings on the soul. True, the forms of things inhere in the soul and contain and embellish it. And the soul becomes like an abode for them through the medium of the material intellect. Now, if the soul were to become a form for an existent in actuality and this form an intellect, which is in actuality by its essence, and furthermore if the form were to have no capacity to receive anything, for the capacity of reception is in the receiver, then it would follow of necessity that the soul has no ability of accepting another form or any other thing. But in fact you see it receiving a form other than this one. If this other [i.e., first form] does not contradict this [i.e., second] form, then this is really strange for in this case receiving and non-receiving become one and the same thing. If it does contradict it, then the soul, if it is [22] the intelligible form, has become something other than itself. And this is of no avail….'[32]

I say: this is another proof of his for the repudiation of this view. Its answer will come to you shortly. Thus we say: there are two points we have to know before delving into the critique of what the Master and others have said in rejecting the unification between the intellector and the *intelligibilia* in a general and specific way. The first is that existence in everything is the principal reality in existentiation, and it is the principle of its particularity, the source of its quiddity, and the measure of its essence. Existence belongs to the

category of things that allow intensification and diminution in terms of perfection and imperfection, and it has essential qualities and modes in every degree of intensification and diminution as different from what it had before.

The second [point]: as motion and transformation take place in quality and quantity, it also occurs in the formal substance, which is connected to matter in a certain way. Motion in every category is necessitated by a single being that is continuous, individual and gradual. [Such a being] has a specific delimitation among the delimitations of existence in every presumed moment of this motion. And it has [this specific delimitation] neither before nor after this [moment].

Once these two principles are established, whose investigation and defense we have presented in detail in our longer books, we say that unification between two things is considered to be of three kinds:

First is the unification of an existent with another existent after it becomes multiple or in such a way that the beings of two things become one single being. As the Master and others have mentioned among their proofs for the rejection of unification, this is not plausible, and its impossibility is obvious.[33]

The second [kind of unification] is that a quiddity among quiddities and a meaning among meanings becomes another quiddity by itself and another meaning through essential primary predication.[34] This is also impossible because separate concepts cannot become one single concept. Hence no quiddity-qua-quiddity [23] can be another quiddity by itself unless the existence of one of the quiddities ceases to exist and another existence comes about.

The third is that something becomes existent insofar as an intellective meaning and universal quiddity apply to it. This [meaning and universal quiddity] is not applicable to it in the first place because of an intensification that has occurred in its existence, and because of a perfection that has come about in its continuous individual identity through conjunction (*ittiṣāl*). Now, this is not impossible. Don't you see that the form of a single man is the subject of numerous modes from the state of embryo and even sperm all the way to the state of being an intellect and intelligible? [Don't you see also] that all intelligible meanings whose different instances are found in inanimate beings, plants and animals are found together in man in a simple manner?

One cannot say that these multiple meanings are found in man because of the multiplicity of his capacities or because of a single capacity [in him]. We argue that this is because of the form of his essence, which is already one and implied in his capacities. All of man's perceptual faculties and animal and natural motion emanate upon the matter of the body. The subjects of sense organs come from one single source, and it is [the person] himself and the reality of his essence. All of these faculties are derivatives of this principle, and it is the sense of senses and the actor of all actions just as the simple intellect, which the philosophers have firmly established, is the principle of the *intelligibilia* conjoined with the human soul. In this tract, it will become clear

to you that the active intellect in our souls is all of the meanings that exist in caused beings (*ma'lūlāt*) in terms of veracity (*ṣidq*) and verification (*taḥqīq*).

In short, it is not impossible for a single essence to be the subject of a meaning which it did not have before. By the same token, it is not impossible for an essence to be transformed in such a way that what is applicable to dissimilar and multiple essences becomes applicable to it also.

As it was said:

It is not to be denied for God
To gather the entire universe in one

Now let us turn to responding to their arguments. Concerning the general proof which the Master has mentioned in the [24] *Ishārāt* by saying that 'if each one of the two entities exists, then they are two separate beings,' we say the following: this is obviously not admitted owing to the fact that two concepts can have one single existence. Sensing and speaking are two different meanings that can be distinguished from one another. But they become a single being in man.

The same applies to the general proof mentioned in the *Shifā'*. His argument states that 'when a thing becomes something else, it becomes that thing either as an existent or non-existent.' We opt that it becomes as an existent. He also says that 'if it exists, then the second one is either an existent or non-existent.' We say: we opt for the view that it is an existent. As for his claim that 'thus the two are two [separate] existents, not a single being,' we say that they are two existing meanings with one existence, and it is not impossible for multiple meanings to have one single existence.

As for the two specific arguments about the intellector and the intelligible, which the Master mentions in the *Ishārāt*, his argument runs as follows: 'Has C remained the same before it intellected A?' We say: we choose that it is what it is insofar as the principle of existence is concerned. But it is not what it is from the point of view of potency and perfection just like the hylé when it becomes a physical entity. The hylé does not cease to be matter when it becomes formed by the form of perfection except from the point of view of imperfection and defection. This is like a child becoming a grown-up person because nothing has vanished from him except what is [already] a matter of non-existence (*amr 'adamī*).[35] This is also acknowledged by the Master in the Eighth Chapter of the Metaphysics of the *Shifā'* where he explains the generation of something from something else. It is, therefore, firmly established that the transformation of something into something else is of two kinds:

'First: the first [thing], insofar as it is what it is, moves by its nature into perfection [as caused] by the second [thing]. This is like the child who, when he becomes a grown man, does not vanish but is rather perfected, and no substantial and accidental quality has disappeared from him except what is related to deficiency and potentiality.

Second: the nature of the first [thing] does not permit it to move into the second [thing] even though this might be necessitated by [25] its ability to accept its form not from the standpoint of its quiddity but from the standpoint of the carrier of its quiddity. Water, for instance, becomes air in such a way that the form of water-ness leaves its matter and the form of air-ness obtains for it.' Then he said: 'In the first part, the substance, which belongs to the first [thing], comes about in the second [thing]. But the second part does not bring about that which belongs to the second [thing] by itself but only a part of it. Therefore it destroys this substance.'

This is the summary of his argument. It is obvious that the generation of something from something else can be in such a way that the first becomes united with the second and it remains the same as it was before. How does he deny this? Then comes [the point] which he explains concerning the difference between the two parts in the generation of something from something else: 'In the first part, the form, by virtue of its nature and quiddity, changes into something else like the transformation of the child into adulthood. In the second case, it does not change because of its nature and quiddity but because of the carrier of its quiddity, viz., by virtue of another cause such as coercion or the like as in the case of water when it becomes air.' This [point] is quite obvious in the demonstration of substantial motion and essential perfection like the sperm becoming an embryo, then an animal, then a baby, and then a man. Without doubt, it has these transformations and perfections not because of the compulsion of a coercing subject or a casual or accidental will but because of an essential and substantial transformation whereby the transformed is not destroyed by the influx of the transformer. Rather, its existence is intensified and its identity and essence perfected.

The same applies to the case where a non-intellecting subject becomes an intellector in actuality, from which only what is imperfect and defective is detracted. This transposition in these modes does not take place from the point of view of the second part, which happens after generation and corruption, because this did not and does not happen from the standpoint of the necessity of essential nature in terms of coercion and the like. This is like the fact that the transformation of some elements into others takes place because of causes external to their nature.

It is also permitted that the human soul continues to be one single soul from its generation out of a sperm to its potentiality in every thing and in every perception including sense-perception, imagination, and all the way to its being an intelligible and an intellector [26] in actuality as a single substance. It has only one definition in terms of substantiality (*jawhariyyah*) and existence. And it does not become different except through accidents outside the category of perceptions and changes (lit., 'motions'). But the human soul goes further and contains in itself the souls of the perfect Prophets, peace be upon them, together with the souls of the insane and the children and even the embryo in the wombs of mothers, all of which are at one single level in terms of the substantiation

of the essence of humanity (*al-insāniyyah*) and its reality. The difference comes about only as a result of the extraneous attachments that accompany its existence.

Now, if it is said that these existential perfections are like the principle of existence added to the meaning of humanity and to the quiddity of man, then this requires us to know how existence is added to quiddity. This [addition] is true only in terms of mind and mental analysis, not in terms of external reality in spite of the fact that it is existence that exists in the external world, and that quiddity is united with it and subject to it without the quiddity being instaured by itself. It is not [accurate] to imagine an instauration between quiddity and its existence because that which is instaured by itself is the existence of every thing, quiddity being thereby subject to it like a shadow.

He says that 'if this [quality] has ceased from it, then it invalidates [the conclusion] that it [i.e., the first thing] has changed into it [i.e., the second thing], in which case the essence has remained the same and this is like the other kinds of transformation, not like what they say.' We respond: nothing has ceased from its constitutive elements or from the existence of its essence except what is related to imperfection and deficiency. If it had an imperfect substance, it has now become perfected and intensified in its substantiation. This is not like the other types of transformation that fall under the second kind [mentioned by Ibn Sīnā], like water when it becomes air and black when it becomes white.

He says that 'if it has remained the same in its essence, then its essence has ceased to exist and a new thing has originated and come about, not that it itself has become something else.' We respond: it was already explained that what ceases to exist belongs to what is a matter of non-existence such as the potential aptitude and deficiency.

He then says that 'it is incumbent upon you to ponder over this and learn that this [transformation] requires a common matter and a compound, not simple, renewal.' We respond: we do not disallow that such a substance, which is renewed [27] existentially and whose essence changes continuously, has a kind of relationship with a material substance because of motion and time. As for his admission of compound (*murakkab*) but not simple renewal, this is not allowed if he means by this the external compound (*al-tarkīb al-khārijī*) in itself because no formal being (*wujūd ṣūrī*) has a compound outside that which prepares it to become an intellect in actuality. If he means by this the analytical mental compound or compound not in itself but between it and the external matter—such as the body until a natural species comes out of it like the natural man—, then this is allowed as it does not contradict the simplicity of the form.

As for the other specific argument which he mentioned in the *Shifā'*, he says that 'if the soul were to be the form of something among the concrete existents in actuality—according to his statement—, and we see it taking on another form […].' The gist of his argument is that the aspect of actuality is

different from the aspect of receptivity and that something's being a form terminates its being matter unless it becomes an external composition. We say that the way this difficulty is resolved has two aspects.

First: something's being a form for a sensate thing does not prevent it from being a matter for an intellective thing. What is implausible is that one single being becomes both actual and potential as compared to one single source and one single level [of existence]. The soul is therefore the form of sensate forms in this world and the matter of intellective matters in the other world.

The second: we have already mentioned the difference between the matter of physical bodies and the matter of intellective beings. The former is capable of carrying only one single form, and multiple forms accumulate in it because of the narrowness of the existence of sensate matter in regards to joining the forms of multiple things together. This is in contrast to the matter of intellective forms in that whenever a form among them is brought forth from potentiality into actuality, it becomes more intensified in accepting other [forms] and stronger in having a relationship with other things.

Then I say the following for the further clarification of this matter: the soul is the first to emanate upon the matter of the body, which is like the structure of corporeal existents and sensate and imaginal forms. As such, in its initial stage of existence, it is not [28] an intellective form for any [concrete] thing. Thus, in our opinion, it is impossible for a single physical species—such as man—to come about from the conjunction of an intellective form and natural and corporeal matter without the intermediacy of perfections and transformations for this [particular] matter. For me, this is the most implausible thing. Therefore the relation of matter to its proximate form is the relation of the potential to the actual, of the imperfect to the perfect; and the relation of forms to it is like the relation of differentia that obtains for the genus.

At the beginning of its primordial nature (*al-fiṭrah*), the soul is the form of one single thing from among the existents of this corporeal world. Nevertheless it contains in its potency the power to journey to the angelic world in a gradual manner. The reason for this journey is the weakness of its sensate constitution. In its state of animality, the soul is the weakest of all animals just as the animal's vegetative power is weaker than [the vegetative power] of other plants. In the same way, the plants are weaker than material elements (*jamādāt*) in their natural power to preserve the composition of all elements. Similarly, the elemental natures that exist in minerals are weaker in terms of quality, and more defective in terms of form than the discrete simple elements (*al-basā'iṭ*). This is so because the nature of a physical body that moves from one degree to another is such that its state within the confines of its movement is to be between sheer potentiality and complete actuality in order for it to move from one state [of existence] to another as we see in other motions and changes. Due to this weakness and imperfection in the animal aspect of man, as God the exalted has said 'and man has been created weak' (Qur'ān 4:28), he has been given the possibility of walking from this world to the supreme angelic world.

The human soul is corporeal in its origination and spiritual in its subsistence.[36] Therefore it is first a natural form for sensate matter, and it has the capacity of accepting the intellective form that actualizes it as an intellect in actuality and with which it is united as an intellective unity. There is no contradiction between this sensate actuality and the acceptance of intellective perfection since it has been transformed in its perfection and reached in its transformation all of the natural boundaries from the most coarse to the most subtle until it has obtained the first degree of [29] life in the power of touching. After this, the soul journeys through the boundaries of corporeal animal reality all the way to the [stage of] imagination and estimation (*wahmiyyah*), and to the last degree of estimative animal,[37] which can be found in beings other than man, and from there to the first degree of intellective animal.[38] The form of the sensate soul is like matter for the imaginal form, which is, in turn, like matter for the intellective form. The first to shine upon it are the beginnings of the *intelligibilia* and the general common knowledge followed by the secondary *intelligibilia* and what comes after them in a gradual manner.

He says that 'the essence of forms does not possess the power of accepting anything.' We say: we do not accept this view. Rather, the aspect of acceptance is implicit in it, which entails the differentia for simple species.

He says that 'the [capacity of] acceptance is certainly for the receptor of something.' We say: yes, but in a different sense. And this is the passive (*infi'āl*) potential renewal that generates the counterpart of something such as when something conjoined becomes disjoined and when water becomes air. As for reception (*qabūl*) in the sense of being perfected, an entity that has form (*al-shay' al-ṣūrī*)[39] can have a reception that completes its perfection as compared to that by which its existence is intensified and its essence is perfected. It was already mentioned in narrating the Master's statement that the [generation of the] existence of something from something else can be by way of perfection. This is the vertical series of existential wayfaring. Or, it can be by way of corruption. And this is the horizontal series of accidental wayfaring as [we see] in the case of preparatory conditions (*mu'iddāt*).

In short, the reception of something can be accompanied by its external non-existence, and this requires an external composition between the receptor and its receptacle. Or it can be accompanied by its mental non-existence within the confines of mental analysis. The former holds true for matter that receives sensate forms whereas the latter holds true for the form attached to it in a certain way.

As for the form free from matter in all regards, it does not have the expected perfection [in it] in an essential way. Furthermore we say that when the soul, which is potentially an intellect, is united with another intelligible other than itself, this other is not its own otherness because it is a form in actuality existing with another being. This is rather an intellective meaning (*ma'nā 'aqlī*). [30] This meaning is not applicable to the soul in the first place for it

has come about because of the intensification that has occurred in its existence whereby it has become applicable to its carrier, corresponding to its truth.

In our view, what is meant by the form of a thing is its existence, not its concept and universal meaning. [In this sense], form is one and simple for everything. But it may become applicable to various meanings and attributes of perfection. Or, it may not be so, and this is because existence can be strong and intense or weak and deficient. Whenever existence is stronger and more intense, it contains in itself more meanings and effects (*āthār*), and vice versa.[40]

When the soul becomes stronger, it becomes the locus of multiple meanings. Each of these meanings, when found by themselves as a weak existence, is a form for a deficient corporeal species such as the intelligible [reality of the] horse, the intelligible [reality of the] tree, and the intelligible [reality of the] earth. Each one of these has a form. When this form is found in the extra-mental world, it is the form of a material species with an essence different from any other material species. When it is found in the intellect, its intellective form is existentially united with an intellective substance because the intellective existence is an exalted and noble being in which all of the *intelligibilia* can be found with one single existence in contrast to the unity of the hylé and forms of corporeal things in it.[41]

He says: 'And if it is different [from its previous state], then the soul, even though an intelligible form, has become other than its own essence.' We respond: it has become other than itself not in terms of number but in terms of perfection and imperfection. And the perfection and completeness of something is the thing itself that has simply become nobler (*afḍal*).

Then he says: 'But rather the soul is the intellector. What is meant by the intellect is either its potencies through which intellection takes place, or the form of these *intelligibilia*. Since they become intelligible in the soul, the intellector, the intelligible, and the intellect cannot be one and the same thing.' I respond: as for the first matter concerning the intellect in actuality, this is not true because this potency, whether what I mean by it is the capacities of the soul or its simple essence separate from [31] the forms of the *intelligibilia*, cannot be the intellect in actuality. Otherwise the same thing would be both potency and actuality, ignorance and knowledge. The knowledge (*'ilmiyyah*)[42] of something about something else is not a relation between the two as it is the view of the Master and some other philosophers.

As for the view that this intelligible form is an intellect in actuality, his assumption is based on the claim that the ensouled substance (*al-jawhar al-nafsānī*), which is the form of perfection for the human sensate animal, becomes an intellect for it and that it is what it is in itself without any change. We have already discovered the impossibility [of this assumption] and explained its fallacy in two ways:

[I]. From the standpoint of the soul: how can an essence, which is denuded of intelligence, know intellective forms that are separate from its essence and

whose existence is extrinsic to its own existence? In the same way, the establishment (*thubūt*) of something for something else in a general sense is secondary to the establishment of what has already been established [i.e., the thing itself]. By the same token, the presence of an intellective existence to something else is secondary to its own intellective existence, or a concomitant of it. The intelligible in potentiality, which is the material form, cannot be established except for an intelligible in potentiality as in the case of physical bodies and quantities with a physical location. In a similar manner, the intelligible in actuality cannot be established except for an intelligible in actuality.

It was already made known and explained that before becoming an intelligible essence, the soul is not the subject of a form among the *intelligibilia* except potentially as in the case of the imaginal and estimative forms before the light of the active intellect shines upon the faculty of imagination and these imaginal forms.

[II]. From the standpoint of these forms, you have already learned with the proof that God has bestowed upon us out of His mercy that these forms themselves are intelligible essences regardless of an intellect extrinsic to their essence and whether another intellect intellects them or not. Therefore they are intellectors for themselves. But we know from our own selves that they are intellectors and the soul can be united with them. This is what we wanted to prove.

Know that even though the Master is one of the most persistent people in denying the unification of the intellector with the intelligible in his other writings, he has accepted this matter in his book called *al-Mabda' wa'l-ma'ād*. I do not [32] know if this [denial of his] was a matter of describing their way of thinking or it was his real belief [that he arrived at] through a vision that befell him as an emanation of the light of the truth from the horizon of the Angelic reality. The verifier (*muḥaqqiq*) [Naṣīr al-Dīn] al-Ṭūsī—may God bless his secret—has mentioned this [point] in his commentary on the *Ishārāt*, apologizing for the Master's exposition of the matter there [i.e., in *al-Mabda' wa'l-ma'ād*]. In fact, this commentator called this [view] a fallacious path. [But in reality] he (i.e., Ṭūsī) composed this book [of commentary] to explain the path of the Peripatetics whereby his exposition was conditioned by this [main goal]. Know that had it not been for that by which God has blessed some of the followers of the path of spiritual poverty (*al-fuqarā' al-sālikīn*) and expanded their breasts by the power of the Exalted and the Sovereign One, the realization of this extremely difficult matter would have been completely dependent upon the ancients (*al-awā'il*) and would not have been inherited by any of the previous philosophers indulged in discursive thinking. 'And praise be to God who has guided us to this; never could we have found guidance had it not been for the guidance of God' (Qur'ān 7:43).

[33] *The Second Discourse*

Concerning that the Simple Intellect Is All the Intelligibilia and that in Its Intellection of Something It Is United with the Active Intellect, and the Related Matters. This Part Consists of Several Chapters.

The First Section

Concerning that Every Simple Reality Is All Existential Things Except What Belongs to Deficiencies and Negations.

Know that every simple reality is all things by its own ipseity (*huwiyyah*) from all points of view. Otherwise the existence of its essence would be constituted by the ipseity of something and not something else, and its essence would be composite even in the mind from the point of view of mental analysis.

The explanation of this is as follows: when we say that man is negated of horse-ness (*farasiyyah*) or that he is not a horse, this does not apply to him from the point of view of human-ness (*al-insāniyyah*).[43] Insofar as he is man, he is man and nothing else. If he were to be man insofar as he is man and not horse, his relation as man would necessitate this negation. Then this is not pure negation but the negation of a mode of existence. And existence-qua-existence is neither non-existence nor a potentiality for something unless there is [34] a composition (*tarkīb*) in it.

Every subject, since it is a composite, is [the locus of] corroboration (*miṣdāq*) and does not require the negation of a predicate either univocally or derivatively. When you represent in your mind the form of such a subject and the form of this negative predicate either univocally or derivatively, and then compare the two whereby one is negated from the other and necessitates its negation from it, then the proposition which is predicated of the subject that it is so and so becomes united with the proposition which is not predicated of the subject that it is not so and so. This holds true whether the difference is from the point of view of external reality, in which case it becomes necessary to have an external composition of matter and form, or from the point of view of the intellect, in which case it becomes necessary to have an intellective composition of genus and difference or of quiddity and existence.

When, for instance, you say that 'Zayd is not a writer,' this does not mean that the form of Zayd is the form of the non-writer otherwise Zayd, insofar as he is Zayd, would be pure non-existence. But the subject of this proposition has to be composed of the form of Zayd and something else by which the quality of 'writer-ness' is negated of him in terms of either potentiality or capability. Therefore a general actuality[44] cannot be the non-existence of something else unless there be in it a composition of act on the one hand, and potentiality, on the other, even if it is in terms of mental analysis. Thus every

reality which is simple from all points of view is the Necessary Being—exalted be His Remembrance—, and it is the plenitude (*tamām*) of everything in the most exalted, superior and virtuous way, from which nothing is negated except deficiencies and imperfections. Thus It is the plenitude of all things. And the plenitude of something is more real and firmer in itself. The pure separate realities (*al-mufāraqāt*) that come after It are in proportion to their simplicity and proximity to the Necessary Being, and they are the plenitude and joining of all causal beings below them. The same holds true for every higher reality in comparison to what is below it, for every cause in comparison to its effect, and for every complete being in comparison to its deficiency.

Thus the vegetative soul is the plenitude of natural powers that include attraction, defense and transformation (*iḥālah*). The animal soul is the plenitude of perceptual, vegetative, animal and natural powers. And the rational soul is the plenitude of everything [35] below it. Let this be firmly preserved by you.

The Second Section

Concerning the Investigation of the Saying of the Ancients that the Soul Intellects Things Through Its Unification with the Active Intellect[45]

It is a well-known view in the books of such philosophers of the Islamic period as the Chief Master [Ibn Sīnā] and those who follow his way that the view such as the one mentioned before [about the unification of the soul with the active intellect] is false and that it is like the first view [about the simple intellect being all of the *intelligibilia*]. Concerning its fallacy, they mentioned that the active intellect is either a single unitary thing above multiplicity or something with parts and divisions.

The first argument states that since that which is united with it [the active intellect] intellects one thing, it should intellect all of the *intelligibilia*.[46] [The second argument states that] if it is united with some but not all parts of it, it then follows that the active intellect should have a part insofar as man's intellection of every contingent being is concerned. But human intellections are infinite. Then [it is falsely concluded] that It [i.e., the active intellect] is composed of infinite parts with different realities and species.

Then each of these *intelligibilia* would occur for an infinite number of souls, and Zayd's intellection of blackness would be like 'Amr's intellection [of blackness]. In this case, the active intellect by itself would have infinite parts united with the species not once but infinite times, [and] each of these would be infinite and united with [a particular] species. This, in addition to the impossibilities already contained therein, leads to an impossibility from another point of view, which is the following: those that are united with the species are distinguished from each other not by their quiddity and concomitants but by contingent and separate accidents, [36] and this is not permitted except for

matter and its external effects (*infi'ālāt*). The active intellect is free from this, and its parts are better suited for disembodiment. It is neither distinguishable by accidents nor multipliable. Thus the active intellect is simple whereas it was supposed to be composite, and this is a clear contradiction. Therefore the view concerning the unification of the soul with It is impossible.

This is what the later philosophers have mentioned [in their books concerning the fallacy of this view],[47] to which the Master has alluded in the *Ishārāt* after describing [the views of] this school by saying that 'they have made the active intellect either composed of parts with which one thing after another can be conjoined, or one single conjunction, which makes the soul perfect and able to reach every intelligible.'

I say: this path, just like the one mentioned before, has been attributed to the virtuous scholars rooted in wisdom and knowledge. Without doubt, it has a veritable yet hidden aspect, whose investigation requires intense study and serious scrutiny combined with the cleansing of the mind and the refinement of one's inner state as well as supplicating to God and soliciting His success and aid. We have prayed to Him in humility with our intellects and raised to Him not only our perishing hands but also our inner hands, and expanded our souls between His hands, supplicating to Him for the unveiling [of the solution] of this problem and its likes with the request of an untiring refugee seeking refuge until our intellects were illuminated by His luminous light and some of the veils and obstacles were removed for us. Then we witnessed the intelligible world to be a single being with which all beings in this world are conjoined in accord with their differences. From Him is their beginning and to Him is their return, and He is the principal source of the *intelligibilia* and all quiddities without His being multiplied and parted, without His being deficient with the deficiency [of the negation] of anything from Him, and without His being augmented with the return of anything to Him and its conjunction with Him. This is not the place to prove these substances and explain their states and conditions. All that befits to be mentioned here is what will silence the attack of the denial of the denier concerning the conjunction of the soul with this [intelligible] world in the perception of every intelligible, and what will destroy the vehemence of their drifting away from the wide path of truth. There are three points here.

[37] First: it was mentioned that when the soul intellects something, it becomes identical with its intellective form. We have already completed its demonstration with firm proofs, and resolved the doubts about it. Then [it was proven that] the intellective form is one of the things that cannot be multiple insofar as it is an intellective form. Therefore every reality which is one and belongs to a species does not become multiple when its members become multiple except through material accidents. Since the intellective form in actuality is disengaged from matter, its disengaged members cannot be multiple either. It was already demonstrated that the intelligible in actuality from the

species of quiddity cannot be but one single intellective [reality] even if it is intellected by a thousand intellects.

Second: oneness is of many modes, and the oneness of intellects is not numerical, which is the source of numbers, such as the oneness of body and blackness, movement, and so on among the material things. The oneness of the intellect is rather like the oneness that belongs to the species. The difference between numerical and other kinds of oneness is the following: oneness in material bodies, like their existence, accepts augmentation and diminution, and it is different from its like when it is considered to be [increased or decreased]. [In this way] the sum total is greater and more than one. Therefore two bodies are more than one of them. In the same way, the state of these two blacknesses in their being two is not like the state of one in its oneness, and this is in contradiction to intellective oneness. If we suppose, for instance, the existence of one thousand homogenous intellective forms, the state of one [intellect] in its oneness would be like this one thousand in its multiplicity.

An example of this is the man-qua-man. When you add to this meaning a meaning similar to it in terms of its specific reality after its being disembodied from [its] additional qualities (*al-zawā'id*), you would find neither it nor the whole [of man and the meaning added to it] in their second [state] except in the way you have found the first one in its oneness. For this reason it is mentioned in discussions of quiddity that when additional qualities that individuate [a quiddity] are cut off from each meaning, which is related to its species with multiple members in the external world, an intellective form of it is inscribed in the soul. When it is cut off from another individual that distinguishes it [from others] in external existence, what is added to the shared quiddity does not affect the soul with a different effect except the first [one]. The author of the *Talwīḥāt* [Suhrawardī] has pointed to this meaning when he said: 'Whenever you consider (the pure existence than which there is nothing [38] more perfect)[48] for the second time and look at it again, [you see that] it is what it is; thus there is nothing that distinguishes (*mayyiz*) a pure thing [other than itself].'[49]

Third: as explained before, the simple intellect is all of the intelligible things from the point of view of its differentiating meanings in a single being. The meaning of its being all of the *intelligibilia* is not that these things have become unified insofar as the unification of their external and specific existence with each other is concerned. This is impossible and known to anyone with even the slightest knowledge. The quiddity of the horse has a being in the external world with extraneous attachments such as quantity, position and color in a specific matter. It also has a specific quiddity with mental concomitants and corresponding meanings existing through an intellective being, with which its definitive parts and constituent elements are united. And it is the function of the mind to analyze it into these parts.

Therefore we say: each of the realities of these species has a mode of existence as a material body by which its members are differentiated, through

which its individuals are multiplied, and in which they are found closely tied to one another in terms of space or time. In the same way, each of them has a specific intellective existence, differentiating its species in meaning and concept. Thus the intelligible [reality] of the horse is one thing and the plant is another in terms of quiddity and meaning, which is based on primary essential predication. But the aim is [to show] that multiple quiddities can be multiple in meaning and concept, and manifold in the external world in terms of existence and instauration (*ja'l*), existing with one single intellective existence. Existence by itself is inclusive of all these meanings with its simplicity and unity.

Once these premises are established, we say that it is in the nature of the human soul to perceive all of the existential realities and unite with them through a conceptual unification (*ittiḥād ma'nawiyyah*). It is also in its nature to become a simple intellect and an intellective knower,[50] in whom resides the form of every intellective existent and the meaning of every physical being in a way higher than [39] their mode of physical existence. In the same way, the five senses are contained in one single sense as in the case of common sense, when we suppose, for instance, that the form of the intellective horse is found in the soul. We have already established that the meaning of species concerning a single entity cannot, by definition, be multiple in terms of its intellective being or in terms of the concept and quiddity except through something added to its intellective being and definitional concept. Therefore the intellective horse that exists in the active intellect does not contradict the intellective horse that exists in another intellective substance that we have assumed. This is just like the soul that has become an intellect in actuality through [the active intellect] from the point of view of [its] reality and meaning. What is in the soul and what is in the active intellect as the quiddity of the horse is one single reality as an intellective unity. It has already been mentioned that the soul becomes united with every intellective form that it has intellected in actuality. It follows from this that it is united with the active intellect, in which everything exists from this point of view except that which has not yet been perceived from among intellective realities.

It is thus established and verified that every soul that has perceived an intellective form has become united with the intellect in the form of an intellective unity from this point of view. When all meanings exist in the simple intellect through a single being without requiring any multiplicity in it, it is possible for them to be found in external material beings as multiple [meanings]. In the same way, the transformation of these meanings in other places—for instance in the external world, the senses, and imagination—as having multiple beings does not lead to [the conclusion that] its likes in the intellect become divisible insofar as its existence is concerned. Rather, it is found in the intellect as a being exalted from any taint of divisibility and partition. This does not necessitate the unification of multiple souls with the

active intellect from the point of view of their lower perfections nor does it imply that every soul reaches every perfection and every virtue.

Whoever has difficulty in understanding this does so because he has neglected the critical investigation of intellective unity (*al-waḥdat al-'aqliyyah*), and compared it with numerical unity (*al-waḥdat al-'adadiyyah*). Don't you see that such intellective meanings as being rational, braying and neighing are united with one single meaning of genus as in the case of the animal? In spite of this, it does not necessitate the division of the meaning of the horse-qua-horse into parts nor does it lead to the transformation of every individual and [40] species of animal into the totality of other individual animals. This is so because the unity of the animal-qua-animal is a unity-in-general, and unity-in-general allows the unification of differences in itself. The same applies to the intellective unity, which does not preclude the union of multiple meanings within itself. Thus the intellective animals (*al-ḥayawānāt al-'aqliyyah*) can be united in the intellective animal just like the animal-in-general that belongs to a species.

The Third Section
The Quotation of What We Have Mentioned from the Word of the Ancient Philosopher [the Author of the Theology]

Aristotle said in the *Book of Theology*: 'The higher world is the perfect living [reality] in which everything is contained, for it has originated from the first perfect source. In it is to be found every soul and every intellect, and there is absolutely no indigence and need here since things therein are all filled with richness and life as if it is life that exceeds and gushes forth. The life of these things issues forth from one single source, not just from one single heat (warmth)[51] or one single wind (smell). Rather, all of them are one single quality in which is to be found every food [i.e., livelihood for them].'[52]

He also said in it [i.e., the *Theology*]: 'The difference between life and intellects here [in the higher world] is due to the difference of changes in life and intellect. This is how different animals and different intellects have come about.[53] The only difference is that some of them are more luminous and perfect than others. Therefore some intellects are closer to the first intellect (for which reason they have become more intense in luminosity),[54] and some of them are second and third in rank. Some intellects that are found here have become divine, some rational (*nāṭiqah*), and some non-rational because of their aloofness from these exalted intellects. As for here [i.e., this level], all of them have intellect [41]. For this reason the horse has become an intellect, and the intellect of the horse is a horse. It is impossible for that which intellects the horse to be an intellector for man since this is not possible in the primary intellects. Therefore when the first intellect intellects something, it and what it

intellects are one and the same thing. The first intellect does not intellect something that does not have an intellect [i.e., something that is unintelligible] but intellects it as a species of intellect and a species of life. And the individual life is not the non-existence of the continuous life. In the same way, the individual intellect is not the non-existence of the intellect in a certain mode.

If this is the case, then the intellect that we find in some living beings is not the non-existence of the first intellect. Every part from the parts of the intellect is all of that with which the intellect can be divided. Therefore the intellect of something, which is an intellect for that very thing, is all things in potentiality. When it becomes actualized, it becomes specific and then actualized. And when it becomes actualized in the last stage, it becomes a horse or another animal. Whenever life journeys into the lowest level, it becomes a living thing in the lowest and basest level. That is why whenever animal faculties reach lower levels, they become weak and some of their acts disappear, from which a meek and weak animal emerges. When it becomes further weak, the intellect existing in it deceits it, and the strong faculties become a substitute for its power just as some animals have nails and claws, and some have horns and some have fangs according to the degree of lack of power in them.'[55] The end of the quote from the words of the philosopher.

In this quote, there is clearly the verification and illumination of all the points we have made and established except for the fact that some of his words need explanation as a precaution for the lack of understanding on the part of those who look at it. We have already explained this issue in the *Four Journeys* and clarified what he wanted to convey by some of these statements.[56] We leave it here for fear of fatigue, and also rely on the understanding of some of the sharp minded, especially those who have heard from me some of the concepts of this book.[57]

Among these [concepts] is the word 'potentiality' (*al-quwwah*), which is used here not in the popular sense of the term [as the opposite of actuality] but rather as what is referred to in [42] the language of the ancients, namely that a single being with its unity comprises quiddities and multiple meanings. It can be found in various beings with different quiddities as in the case of intense blackness. Thus when it is said that weak blacknesses are found in it potentially, what is meant by this is not that these blacknesses in it exist by potential contingency (*al-imkān al-isti'dādī*) without them being [actually] existent. In the same way, when it is said of the simple intellect that it is all the *intelligibilia* in potentiality, what is intended by potentiality is not the meaning attributed to non-existence but its being existent with a single intellective being.

The philosopher has pointed to this meaning by saying: 'The actual is superior to the potential in this world whereas in the higher world, the potential is superior to the actual. This is so because the potential in the intellective substances does not need to come into actuality from anything other than itself since it is complete and perfect in perceiving spiritual things just like the perception of sensate things by the faculty of sight. What is potential here [i.e.,

the higher world] is like the sight here [i.e., the lower world] whereas in the sensible world they need to come into actuality, perceive sensible things, and know the covers of substances, which are their clothes in this world. Therefore they cannot reach the substances of things and their proximity to the disembodiment of covers. In this, they need an act. When substances are disembodied and potentialities are unveiled, however, what is potential becomes sufficient by itself and does not need what is actual in the perception of substances.' End of the quote.[58]

Among [the terms he has used] is the word 'part' (*al-juz'*), and what is meant by it is not what you have in the case of external parts, or mental parts, or definitional parts such as genus and differentia. What is meant by the attribution of parts to intellect is the fact that the intellect is united with external realities in a simple way.

Among these is also the word 'movement and rest, and journey to the lowest level.' What is meant by these is origination (*al-ījād*) and causality. And the rest [of the concepts] are like the way we have explained them.

In another context, he also said in the *Theology*: 'All things are in the intellect and from the intellect, [43] and the intellect is all things. When there is intellect, there are all things, and when there are no things, there is no intellect. The intellect has become the totality of all things because in it are contained all of the attributes of things. There is no attribute in it that does not intellect something. This is so because there is nothing in the intellect which is not in conformity with the existence (*kawn*) of something else.

If it is said that the attributes of the intellect are for itself and not for something else, and [as such] it can never go beyond itself, we say: if you look[59] at the intellect as such and in this way, you have disparaged it and made it a low, inferior and earthly substance since it does not go beyond itself, and its attributes become its totality only. In this case, there remains nothing that distinguishes between the intellect and the senses. This is despicably impossible: the intellect and the senses cannot be one and the same thing.'[60]

He also said: 'All intellects and living beings are contained in the intellect. They are divided [into various classes] within it, and the division in the intellect is not that these things subsist in it or that they are inserted into it. Rather it is the agent of all things even though it acts on them one by one and according to an order and rule. As for the first [primary] agent, it acts on things all at once without an intermediary. We further say that just as the intellect comprises all of the sensate things, the universal sensate (*al-ḥissī al-kullī*) comprises all of the natures of living beings [animals]. And in every living being [animal] are contained many living beings [animals] except for the fact that they are meeker and weaker than the living being [animal] which is higher [in rank]. The living beings [animals] do not cease to become less and weaker in their senses which befit them until they reach the [level of] small and weak living beings [animals] where it finally stops.'[61]

The treatise has been completed. The praise and grace is to God, and the benediction of God is upon Muḥammad and his pure family.

NOTES

1. Cf. my 'An Annotated Bibliography of the Works of Mullā Ṣadrā with a Brief Account of His Life,' *Islamic Studies* Vol. 42, No. 1 (Spring 2003), pp. 21–62.
2. I translate the word *al-āqil* as 'intellector' instead of simply as intellect (*al-'aql*) to convey Ṣadrā's intended meaning. At times, Ṣadrā uses the terms 'intellect, intellector and intellected' together as a more comprehensive title for the unification argument. He occasionally uses the words *al-'aql* and *al-'āqil* interchangeably but there is a subtle difference between the two. While *al-'aql* conveys the generic meaning of intellect, *al-'āqil* refers to the subject in whom the intellect functions as the agent of unification with the intelligible world. Not only the intellect but also the person who intellects is united with the intelligible world. This allows Ṣadrā to tie together his ontology and noetics in a more direct way.
3. I translate the world *al-ma'qūl* as 'intellected' rather than simply 'intelligible.' Depending on the context, *al-ma'qūl* can be translated as intelligible, and I have done so throughout the book. Where possible, I tried to spare the reader such clumsy neologisms as 'intellector-ness' (*al-'āqiliyyah*) and 'intellected-ness' (*al-ma'qūliyyah*).
4. The editor's addition in parenthesis.
5. This prelude is a reference to those including Ibn Sīnā and Suhrawardī who have rejected the unification argument as mere sophistry. Ṣadrā's call for 'proper direction, patience, and fairness' indicates the extent to which the issue has been passionately debated. Cf. *Asfār*, I, 3, pp. 321–322.
6. In the *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 427, Ṣadrā says that he had a copy of a treatise by Alexander of Aphrodisias on the unification of the intellect and the intelligible without mentioning its title. This must be a reference to Alexander's *De Intellectu* discussed in Chapter I. It is important to note that Ṣadrā mentions Alexander's work after he mentions the *Theology of Aristotle* and Porphyry's treatise on the intellect. This confirms one more time that Ṣadrā reads Alexander through the eyes of Neoplatonism and as supporting the unification argument.
7. This section is a paraphrase of *Asfār*, I, 3, pp. 428–433 where Ṣadrā's discussion of Alexander of Aphrodisias follows almost verbatim his *De Intellectu* 106–108.7.
8. The term 'verifier' (*al-muḥaqqiq*) and its plural appear many times in Ṣadrā's writings. Ṣadrā uses it when he refers to a specific group of philosophers whom he considers closer to the perspective of his transcendent wisdom. Ibn al-'Arabī employs the same term to refer to his own school of thought. In its singular form, it is also used as a nickname like 'the verifier' Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī. For its usage in different contexts see *Asfār*, I, 1, pp. 55, 59; I, 2, pp. 12, 38; I, 3, p. 311; II, 1, p. 85; II, 2, pp. 35, 87, 95.
9. This essentially Aristotelian idea refers to the innate potency of sensible objects to assume various forms.
10. Literally 'you are not on a thing' (*shay'*). Ṣadrā is making use of the multiple meanings of the word *shay'* in Arabic.
11. This contrast between the senses and the intellect is a reference to the fact that while the senses can perceive only one sensate object at any given time, the intellect can

conceive multiple concepts. In this regard, 'the senses multiply and the intellect unifies.'

12. As Ṣadrā explains in great detail in the *Asfār*, this is a confirmation of the absolute contingency of possible beings *vis-à-vis* the Necessary Being: they are hung between existence and non-existence.
13. Ṣadrā's choice of words here is extremely important for a proper understanding of how the active intellect functions in classical philosophy. The active intellect is not a 'thing' but a principle or principles of conceptual thinking. Just as light makes things visible, these principles make thinking possible. Unification with the active intellect means to learn these principles and 'participate' in them. The active intellect moves the potential intellect from mere appearances and sensation to principles of thinking. Ṣadrā's phrase 'the agent of intellectual conception' captures this meaning quite accurately. Cf. *Asfār*, I, 3, pp. 431–432.
14. Ṣadrā draws a distinction between the 'presence of perceptual forms for the soul and their actualization in matter.' Cf. *Asfār*, I, 3, pp. 300–304. The presence of something to itself signifies the absence of any epistemic obstacle. Cf. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 449.
15. The word *ja'l*, which I translate as 'instauration,' and its derivatives *jā'il* and *maj'ūl* occupy a special place in Ṣadrā's philosophical vocabulary. Briefly stated, it signifies putting something into a specific state or condition in conformity with its essential properties. Ṣadrā divides it into two: simple and composite. Simple instauration refers to the construction of something by itself when we say, for instance, 'man is man.' In logic, this corresponds to 'essential primary predication' (*al-ḥaml al-dhātī al-awwalī*). Composite instauration refers to cases where the definition of a quiddity involves the convergence of both essential and accidental properties such as when we say 'man is rational animal' and 'man is writer.' For Ṣadrā, what is 'instaured' by itself (*al-maj'ūl bi'l-dhāt*) is not essence but existence because existence does not need an external agent to make it a specific substance whereas all essences need some cause external to them to exist in the external world. In this sense, essences are 'instaured' or produced 'by accident' (*al-maj'ūl bi'l-'araḍ*). Cf. *Asfār*, I, 1, pp. 65–66; *Aṣālat ja'l al-wujūd* in *Majmū'ah*, pp. 184–185; *Sharḥ*, Vol. II, p. 805. See also Ṣadrā's extensive analysis in *Asfār*, I, 1, pp. 396–423 where he talks about concept (*taṣawwur*) and judgment (*taṣdīq*) as two cases of simple and composite instauration. In using the old English word 'instauration,' I follow Corbin and Nasr to distinguish *ja'l* from 'causation.'
16. al-Fārābī distinguishes attribution (*muḍāf*) from necessity (*luzūm*). The 'day' necessitates the sunrise but the two are not 'attributed' to one another in the logical sense. See *Jawābāt*, p. 92.
17. Another consequence of this is what Ṣadrā calls the 'privative' (*salbī*) view of knowledge. Cf. *Asfār*, I, 3, pp. 286–287.
18. As Ṣadrā explains in the following paragraph, his main point is to show the dynamic nature of the soul *vis-à-vis* the sensate, imaginal and intelligible forms that it appropriates. Essentially, this is a criticism directed at the Peripatetic notion of the soul as a passive receptacle of abstract forms. Ṣadrā attributes this view to Ibn Sīnā's belief in the absolute 'disembodiment of the soul from matter in its original state of being (*fiṭrah*)—a view that needs to be corrected.' *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 443. Ibn Sīnā states the same view in various places. See, *inter alia*, his short treatise 'On the Rational Soul' in Gutas, *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition*, p. 74. Even though Ṣadrā bases his criticism on this absolutely non-corporeal view of the soul, he fails to explain why this particular view should lead to a passive concept of the soul. See

also *Shawāhid*, pp. 195–196, 199–200 and 221–222 where Ṣadrā reiterates his view of the soul as arising out of material conditions. For Ṣadrā's proofs, which he calls *sam'ī*, i.e., 'heard' or transmitted, from the Qur'ān, hadith and other reported sayings about the disembodiment of the soul from matter, see *Asfār*, IV, 1, pp. 303–324. Ṣadrā begins this section by saying that 'most people benefit from the transmitted arguments (*sam'iyyāt*) more than they do from the intellectual arguments (*'aqliyyāt*).'

19. Cf. *Shawāhid*, pp. 245–246 where Ṣadrā, following Ibn Sīnā in broad outlines, defines the active intellect as the fundamental principles of thinking. As mentioned before, this meaning is sufficiently clear in Ibn Sīnā's description of the active intellect as the 'principles of intellective forms.' Cf. *Najāt*, p. 234.
20. Ṣadrā is referring to the celebrated controversy between the two theories of vision in the Middle Ages. While the defenders of the 'intromission' theory argued that the vision of physical objects takes place by something coming into the eye, the defenders of 'extromission' explained vision by something going out of the eye and contacting the object seen. While the first view is usually associated with Aristotle and the 'naturalists,' the second view is attributed to 'the mathematicians.' The difficulties and inconsistencies of both views can be followed from David Lindberg, *Theories of Vision from al-Kind to Kepler* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976). For the significance of this debate in the School of Illumination, see, Walbridge, *The Leaven of the Ancients*, pp. 157–164. Ṣadrā rejects both theories and opts for Suhrawardī's idea that vision takes place through an 'illuminative and presential knowledge' (*'ilm ishrāqi ḥuḍūrī*). Cf. *Asfār*, I, 1, p. 301. See also *Asfār*, IV, 1, pp. 178–200 and *Sharḥ*, Vol. I, p. 589. For Suhrawardī, see his *Kitāb al-mashāri' wa'l-muṭāraḥāt*, p. 486, par. 209.
21. This is a reference to Ṣadrā's view *á la* Suhrawardī that perception does not come about as a result of the juxtaposition of the organ of perception and what is perceived. Perception of sensate objects involves consciousness and goes beyond the kind of mere 'relationality,' which Ṣadrā criticizes.
22. Cf. *Uthūlūjyā*, p. 117. The first part of the quote corresponds, with some variations, to the *Enneads*, 5, VIII, 11.
23. Ṣadrā does not mention the books to which he is referring here. It could be a reference to the books that advocate the view that Ṣadrā criticizes here or to his own books in which he provides his alternative account.
24. This is a response to the possible charge of solipsism where the only thing the soul can know is its own being. Ṣadrā rejects the idea of treating perceptual forms as 'conceptual garments' which the mind puts on things in the external world. Instead, he insists on the autonomous intelligibility of substances outside the mind.
25. The kind of work that requires the actual involvement of the body. This point is made clear few lines later in the same paragraph.
26. Cf. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 315.
27. Ṣadrā uses Ibn Sīnā's conventional title *al-Shaykh* throughout the treatise as he does in his other works. I kept to the word 'Master' to translate it. Ṣadrā occasionally uses Ibn Sīnā's full title *al-Shaykh al-ra'īs*, which I have rendered as 'Chief Master.'
28. In the above quotation from the *Shifā'*, Ṣadrā uses the word *mutaqaddimīn* rather than *mutaṣaddirīn* which is the word used in the *Sharḥ*, Vol. 3, p. 292. *Mutaṣaddir*, which Ibn Sīnā uses only when referring to a specific group of people, comes from the root '*ṣ-d-r*' meaning to come forth, to put forward, to emanate, etc. Goichon translates it as those 'philosophers who advance things that have not been proven'

and more specifically those who believe, contrary to Ibn Sīnā, that the soul becomes the object of its intellection. See A. M. Goichon, *Lexique*, p. 177. Massignon translates it as simply 'professors of philosophy.' See Louis Massignon, *Recueil de texts inédit concernant l'histoire de la mystique en pays d'Islam* (Paris: Librairie orientaliste Paul Geunthner, 1929), p. 189.

29. For the quote see *Sharḥ*, Vol. 3, pp. 292–293. This is a reference to Ibn Sīnā's denial of change in the category of substance. It is to be remembered that for Ibn Sīnā, when a substance is transformed, it does not 'evolve' into another substance while preserving its essential identity. Instead, it undergoes generation and corruption (*kawn wa fasād*) and thus becomes something new.
30. Cf. *Sharḥ*, Vol. 3, p. 295.
31. The Rahman edition of *Kitāb al-nafs* (*Avicenna's De Anima*) has the word '*hawwasa*' instead of '*bayyana*' which is what we have in Ṣadrā's quote here. I used Ṣadrā's quote for the translation above rather than the original passage from the *Shifā'*.
32. The quote is from *Avicenna's De Anima*, pp. 239–240 with slight variations.
33. Like Ibn Sīnā and Suhrawardī, Ṣadrā considers unification between two corporeal objects as a physical impossibility. In a section of the *Asfār* where he gives an elaborate discussion of love and its kinds, Ṣadrā reiterates his arguments against the essential unification of two objects, and applies them to love as unification between lover and beloved. He mentions this particular view of love as correct but in need of qualification. Since love, like intelligence, is a quality of the soul not the body, unification between the lover and the beloved can only be spiritual and 'metaphorical.' Lest we think of 'metaphorical' as unreal, Ṣadrā hastens to add that 'metaphor is an archway to reality' (*al-majāz qanṭarat al-ḥaqīqah*). Cf. *Asfār*, II, 3, pp. 175–177.
34. As mentioned before, essential primary predication (*al-ḥaml al-dhātī al-awwalī*) is the kind of predication that is true in both concept and reality. Ṣadrā is referring to particular objects that can be distinguished from one another both in concept and in reality.
35. The expression *amr 'adamī* translated here as 'a matter of non-existence' has a specific referent in Ṣadrā's ontology and noetics. Ṣadrā defines non-existence as the absence of existence, not as a state or term on its own because 'the universal and expanding shadow of existence falls on all essences and concepts including the concept of non-existence, the partner unto God, and the unity of opposites.' *Asfār*, I, 1, p. 146. Non-existence refers to a state of deficiency and privation. Furthermore, according to the theory of substantial motion, when things shed some of their attributes to reach their final *telos*, they do not lose anything from their essential identity. When a child becomes a grown-up person, he becomes 'more' in his substantial motion by leaving the traits of childhood behind. This 'loss' does not detract anything from his new state of existence as a fuller human being. All of the essential properties of a child and an adult person are present in the reality of humanity (*al-insāniyyah*). The reason why Ṣadrā inserts this passage here seems to prove to Ibn Sīnā and his students that a being can transform into something else without losing its essential identity. In fact, the final *telos* of a being contains all of its previous stages of growth and transformation without a residue. Ṣadrā believes that this is what Ibn Sīnā has failed to recognize. In spite of this fundamental difference, it is obvious that in the quotes from the *Shifā'* Ṣadrā is having a conversation with Ibn Sīnā and trying to read his own view of gradational change into Ibn Sīnā's text.
36. Cf. *Shawāhid*, pp. 221–222.

37. Meaning an ‘animal that estimates.’
38. Meaning an ‘animal that intellects.’
39. This Avicennan term may refer to a substance or accident. Cf. *Asfār*, II, 1, p. 186.
40. Cf. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 332. The definition of form as existence or a modality of existence is one of the ways in which Ṣadrā tries to overcome Ibn Sīnā’s hylomorphic ontology. In contrast to the Peripatetic notion of the form as a fixed entity, Ṣadrā defines it as undergoing substantial change in terms of ontological intensity or lack thereof. Cf. *Asfār*, I, 3, pp. 105–107. For the various uses of the term form in Ibn Sīnā see Goichon, *Lexique*, pp. 185–191. In some ways, this is a version of the Platonic Forms as revised from the point of view of Ṣadrā’s gradational ontology. In the *Shawāhid*, Ṣadrā gives a detailed discussion of the Platonic Forms from Plato and Aristotle to al-Fārābī, Ibn Sīnā and Suhrawardī. See *Shawāhid*, pp. 154–178.
41. Cf. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 333.
42. Lit. ‘knowledgeness.’ What Ṣadrā has in mind is the state of being known by something else, and this, he insists, is not a relation (*iḍāfah*).
43. Translating *al-insāniyyah* as human-ness rather than as humanity to maintain the etymological connection between ‘human-ness’ and ‘horse-ness.’
44. Translating *al-fi‘l al-muṭlaq* as ‘general’ rather than ‘absolute’ actuality. This is a reference to Zayd as a person who is *not* a writer. The negation does not make Zayd non-existent. Saying that A is not B does not make A non-existent.
45. This section appears also in *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 335.
46. ‘Because whatever is united with the [active] intellect and all of the *intelligibilia* necessarily intellects whatever the active intellect intellects.’ *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 335.
47. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 336.
48. The addition is in the *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 337.
49. As Sabzawārī explains in his gloss, the gist of Ṣadrā’s argument is the following: what distinguishes pure whiteness as a quiddity from other quiddities is not a white object but whiteness itself. Cf. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 338. The other part of the argument pertains to what happens to an intellective form when it is perceived by multiple intellects. Ṣadrā’s reponse is a reiteration of the unification argument: ‘When the soul becomes an intellect in actuality, the intellective horse (*al-faras al-‘aqlī*) which is in the active intellect and the intellective horse which is in the soul cannot be multiple from the point of view of meaning and truth but only from the point of view of what is added to the definition and truth [of horse-ness]. Therefore what is in the soul and what is in the active intellect as the intellective horse is one and the same thing’. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 339.
50. That is, a knower that knows through the simple intellect.
51. This is a reference to Zeno’s definition of God as ‘warmed breath.’ Cf. Pierre Hadot, *Plotinus or the Simpliciy of Vision*, tr. M. Chase (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), p. 37, n. 5.
52. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 340. The quote is from the *Uthūlūjyā*, p. 94 and the *Enneads*, 6, VII, 12. For Geoffrey Lewis’ translation, see *Plotiniana Arabica* in *Plotini Opera, Tomvs II, Enneads IV–V* (Paris-Bruxelles: Desclee de Brouwer, 1959), p. 467. The quote Ṣadrā uses here shows some important variations from the original Greek. Cf. MacKenna’s translation: ‘[To ask how those forms of life come to be There is simply asking how that heaven came to be; it is asking whence comes life, whence] the All-Life, whence the All-Soul, whence collective Intellect: and the answer is that There no indigence or impotence can exist but all must be teeming, seething, with life. All flows, so to speak, from one fount not to be thought of as one breath or

warmth but rather as one quality englobing and safeguarding all qualities—sweetness [with fragrance…].'

53. As mentioned before, the etymological connection between the words life (*ḥayāt*) and animal (*ḥayawān*) is lost in English. It would be closer to the text to translate these two words as 'animation' and 'animality.'
54. The addition is in the *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 340.
55. Cf. *Asfār*, I, 3, pp. 340–341. The quote is from the *Uthūlūjyā*, pp. 150–151 with minor variations. Cf. the *Enneads*, 6, VII, 9 whose original differs slightly from the quote used by Ṣadrā. The same passage is also found in the *Shawāhid*, pp. 175–178. Cf. Lewis' translation in *Plotiniana Arabica*, pp. 457–459.
56. Cf. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 341. Ṣadrā states that what the author of the *Theology* means by 'motion here is not change or alteration (*al-taghayyur*) but emanation (*al-ṣudūr*) in a certain way.' For Ṣadrā's commentary on the passage quoted, see *Asfār*, I, 3, pp. 341–344.
57. This is probably a reference to Ṣadrā's students Kāshānī, Lāhījī and his son.
58. Cf. the *Uthūlūjyā*, pp. 99–100 with some variations. The quote in Arabic is a freelance translation of the *Enneads*, 6, VII, 13–14 with some sentences not found in the Greek original. Cf. *Plotiniana Arabica*, pp. 467–469.
59. The Badawī edition of the *Uthūlūjyā* has the verb 'turned into' (*ṣayyarta*) instead of 'looked' (*baṣarta*). G. Lewis translation reads as 'if you make the mind in this condition….' *Plotiniana Arabica*, p. 471.
60. Cf. *Uthūlūjyā*, pp. 96–97; *Plotiniana Arabica*, p. 471.
61. Cf. *Uthūlūjyā*, p. 98. This quote and the one before are freelance translations from the *Enneads*, 6, VII, 13–14 with some material from other sources. Cf. *Plotiniana Arabica*, p. 473.

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